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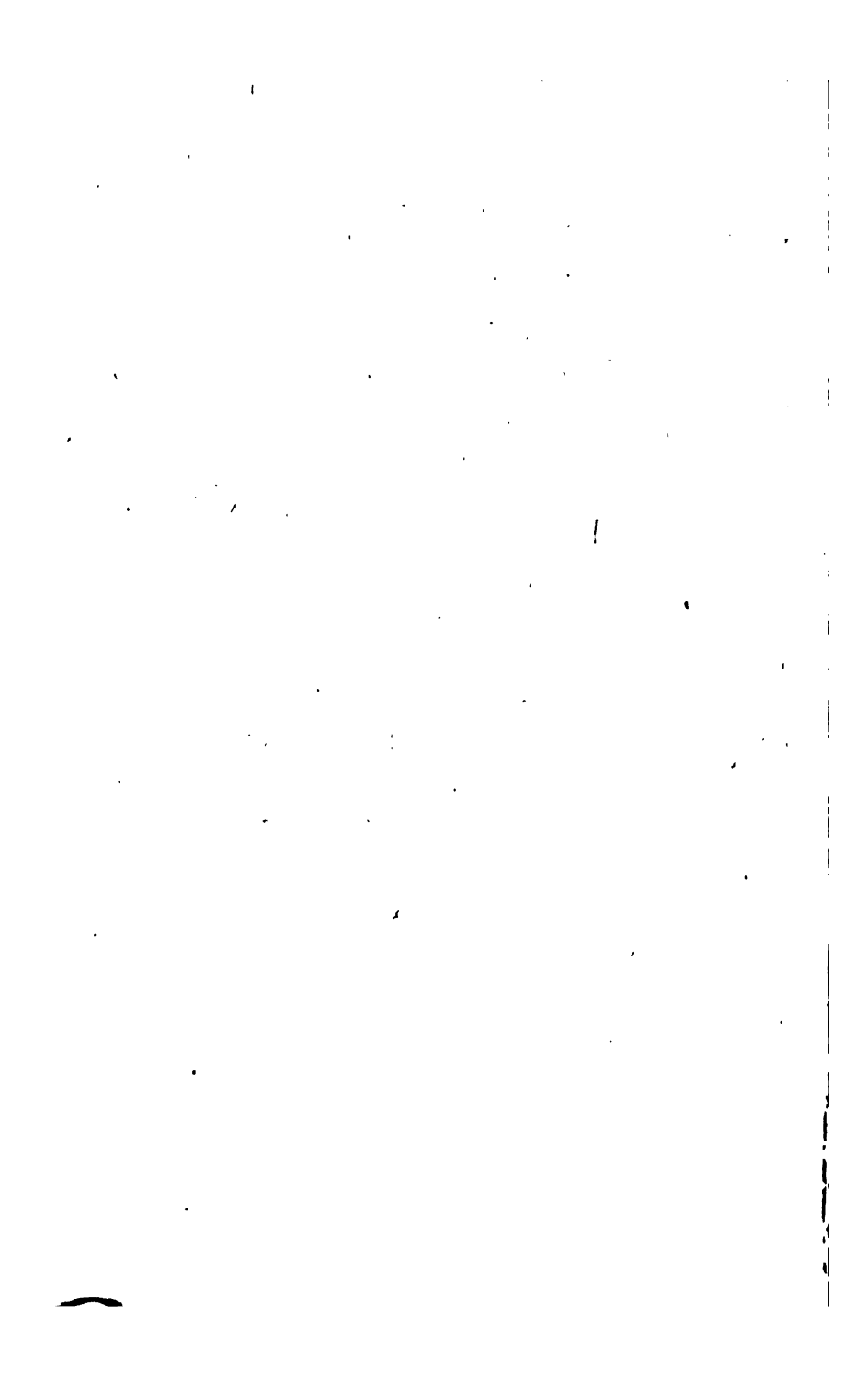




Gilfillan

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A

THIRD

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# GALLERY OF PORTRAITS.

BY

GEORGE GILFILLAN.

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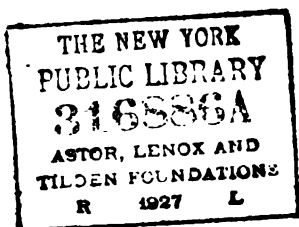
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## P R E F A C E .

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IN issuing a THIRD GALLERY OF PORTRAITS, the Author has a few preliminary statements and explanations to make.

1st. He is aware that some of his friends have of late begrudged the time he has been devoting to periodical writing—a time which they think might be better employed in independent works. To them he would reply, that he *is* employed, slowly, but regularly, in constructing a work on our present religious aspects, besides preparing the materials of others of an entirely different kind from any of his preceding, and which aim, at least, at *paullo majora* than many of his writings in the Magazines and Reviews ; and, that so many are the demands made upon his pen, by the editors and proprietors of journals, that without a

greater faculty of saying "No" than he possesses, he could not altogether avoid compliance with their importunities. The day of a dignified withdrawal from that arena, and of an entire devotion to weightier and more congenial matters, may arrive.

2d, He is induced to send forth the following volume for various reasons. His materials have gradually increased upon his hands, to an amount which renders a selection from them proper and easy. As he contributes to various periodicals, and as many of his friends have only the opportunity of meeting with him in one or two of the five or six periodicals where he writes, it has occurred to him, and the idea has been confirmed by others, that a book containing the cream—if he may so call it—of his diversified lucubrations, might not be unacceptable to them.

3d, His aim in this volume has been to secure the two elements of variety, and of patness to the moment. The sketches here collected are many of them short—they include notices of the most diverse varieties of mind ;—from an *Æschylus* to a *Neale*—from a *Chalmers* to a *Marat* ; they invite special attention to some of those rising poets, whom the Author is proud

to say he has been able somewhat to aid in their generous aspirations ; and they seek to cast a frail garland on the graves of such illustrious men, and so recently removed, as Delta and Wilson. Should the charges of shortness and slightness be urged against some of these essays, he can only point, on the other hand, to the papers on "Napoleon," "Macaulay," "Burke," "Bulwer," "Henry Rogers," "Prometheus," "Shakspeare," and two or three others, as not certainly exposed to the latter of these accusations—if to either.

4th, The careful reader will notice in this new volume, a striking diversity from its companion Galleries in one important particular—he means, a certain change of in his spirit, tone, and language toward the celebrated men who at present lead the armies of Modern Scepticism. This change has repeatedly been charged against him, and ascribed to motives of a personal and unworthy kind. Such motives he distinctly and strongly disclaims. With these men he was never intimate ; their opinions he never held ; of their present estimate of, or feelings toward himself he cares and knows nothing ; but he is willing to grant that

the longer he has read their works, and watched the tendency of their opinions, the more profoundly has he been impressed with a sense of the hopelessness of obtaining any more light or good from such sources, and of the extremely pernicious influences which they, wittingly or not, have exerted, and are still exerting, upon the mind of this country. Those who will take the trouble of reading his papers on "Carlyle's Sterling" and "Emerson" will understand what he means. He has not, in the new edition of his preceding works, suppressed his former expressions of admiration for these men—let them stand—because they were sincere at the time—because they may serve hereafter as landmarks in his own progress—because they never commend the sentiments, but only laud too much the spirit, the intentions, and perhaps the genius of these writers—and because the very energy and earnestness of these laudations will prove, that nothing but a very strong cause, and a very profound conviction, could have made him recoil from them ! To absolute consistency he does not pretend ; to honesty—to progress—and to fidelity *in* his words *to* his thoughts, he does, and ever did. This will, and must

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account, too, for his altered tone in reference to the *literary* merits of some writers whom he had sketched before. His mind no more than his pen has stood still during the last eight years. He commends, in fine, this new volume, as he has done his former ones, to the Public, feeling persuaded, that, as a "true thing," the Public will welcome it; and confident that he will find in this, as in all his former experience, that, let cliques or coteries say or do what they please—

"The great Soul of the world is just."



# A File of French Revolutionists.

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## NO. I.—MIRABEAU.

ONE is sometimes tempted to suppose that our earth hangs between two centres, to which she is alternately attracted, like those planets which are said to be suspended between the double stars, and that she now nears a blue and mild, and now a blood-red and fiery sun. There are beautiful days and seasons which stoop down upon us like doves from heaven, and give us exquisite but short-lived pleasure, in which our world appears a "pensive, but a happy place,"—the sky, the dome of a temple; Eden recalled, and the Millennium anticipated: we are then within the attraction of our milder Star. There are other days and seasons, the darkness of which is lighted up by the foam of general frenzy, like the lurid illumination lent by the spray to the tossed midnight ocean—when there is a crying, not for wine, but for blood, in the streets—when the mirth of the land is darkened, and when all hearts, not filled with madness, fail for fear. Such are our revolutionary eras when our Red Sun is vertical over us, shedding disastrous day, and portending premature and preternatural night.

The value of revolutions lies more in the men they discover, than in the measures they produce. For a superior being, how grand and interesting the attitude of standing, like John, on the sand of the sea-shore, and seeing the beasts, horned or crowned, fierce or tame, which arise from the waves which revolution has churned into fury, to watch them while yet fresh and dripping from the water, and to follow the footprints of their progress! From the vantage-ground of after-time, the



human observer is able to take almost a similar point of view. He has this, too, in his favor. The lives of revolutionists, as well as of robbers, are generally short; their names are written laconically and in blood—their characters are intensified, and sharply defined by death—their footsteps are the few but forcible stamps of desperate courage and recklessness; and the artist, if at all competent for the task of depiction, is helped by the terrible unity and concentration of his subject. If, besides, he be fond of “searching dark bosoms,” where are to be found darker bosoms than those of revolutionists?—if he loves rock scenery, what rock like the Tarpeian, toppling over its Dead Sea?—if he loves to botanize among the daring flowers of virtue, which border the giddiest precipices of guilt, let him come hither—if he wishes to brace his nerves and strengthen his eyesight, and test his faith by sights and sounds of woe, here is his field—if he wishes to be read, and to send down a thrill from his red-margined page into the future, let him write worthily of revolutionists. The “History of Cataline’s Conspiracy” has survived less from its intrinsic merit, than because it records the history and fate of one who aspired to be a revolutionist on a large scale, although he succeeded only in becoming the broken bust of one.

One motive in the present series is somewhat different from any we have now stated. We formerly drew portraits of God’s selected and inspired men. To bring out, by contrast, the color and tone of these, we are tempted now to draw faithfully, yet charitably, the likenesses of some generally supposed to be the *Devil’s* selected and inspired men. Nor are we indifferent, at the same time, to the moral purposes which such painting, and the contrast implied in it, may serve.

We begin with Mirabeau, the first-born of the French Revolution—a revolution in himself. In any age and country, Mirabeau must have been an extraordinary man. We may wish—the more because we wish in vain—that he had lived in an age of religious faith, when the solar centre of the idea of a God might have harmonized and subdued his cometary powers. Had he lived in the time of the Reformation, he had been either a Huguenot of the Huguenots, or a fiercer Guise; but, thrown on an age and a country of rampant denial and licentiousness, he must deny and be lewd on a colossal scale.

He was not, we must remark, of that highest order of minds whose individualism, approaching the infinite, stands alone in whatever age, and which rejects or selects influences according to its pleasure. Mirabeau belonged to that class whose mission is to *exaggerate* with effect the tendency and spirit of their nation and period, and thus to precipitate either their sublimation or their *reductio ad absurdum*. In him the French beheld all their own peculiarities, passions, and powers magnified into magnificent caricature, even as they had seen them exhibited on a *miniature* scale in Voltaire; and hence their intoxicated admiration, and their wild sorrow at his death. When he fell, it was as the fall of the statue on the summit of their national column.

Some of Mirabeau's admirers speak of him as if he were something better than a French idol—as if he partook of a universal character—as if a certain fire of inspiration burned within him, classing him with Burns, and elevating him far above Burke. We cannot, we must confess, see any such stamp of universality on his brow, or rod of divination in his hand. Of all Frenchmen (and he was hardly one,) Rousseau alone appears to us to have so risen out of French influences as to have caught on his wings an unearthly fire, not indeed streaming down from heaven, but streaming up from hell. His *was* a Pythonic frenzy. He spake to the ear of humanity falsely often, but earnestly and powerfully always. His dress might be that of a harlequin, but his bosom was that of a man fanatically in earnest. He was the most sincere man France ever reared. To a pitch of prophetic fury, Mirabeau neither rose by nature like Rousseau, nor, like Burke, was stung by circumstances. He could at all times manage his thunderbolts with consummate dexterity, could husband his enthusiasm, and never allowed himself to be carried away all-powerful in his very helplessness upon the torrent he had stirred. He *had* genius hung up on the armory of his mind, and could upon occasion take down the bright weapon and dye it in blood; but genius never *had* him like a spear in its blind and awful grasp.

Which quality of the Frenchman was wanting in Mirabeau? The versatility, levity, brilliance, instability, irritability, volubility, the enthusiasm of moments, the coldness of years, the

immorality, now springing from tempestuous passions, and now from the cool conclusions of atheism, the intuitive understanding, the declamatory force of the genuine Gaul, were all found in him, but all expanded into extraordinary dimensions through the combustion of his bosom, and all pointed by the romantic circumstances of his story. His originality, like Byron's, lay principally in that wild dark blood which had run down through generations of semi-maniacs, till in him it was connected with talents as wondrous as it was hot.

Mirabeau, as the basis of his intellectual character, possessed intuitive sagacity, and sharp common sense. He was "all eye." His very arm outstretched, and finger up-pointed, seemed to see. No gesture, no motion of such a man, is blind or insignificant. His very silence is full of meaning; his looks are as winged as the words of others. Mirabeau's insight was sharpened by experience, by calamity, by vice, by the very despair which had once been the tenant of his bosom. "The glance of melancholy is a fearful gift." Add the intellect of a fallen demi-god to the savage irritation of a flayed wild beast, and the result shall be the exasperated and hideous penetration of a Mirabeau. The rasping recollections of his persecuted childhood and wandering youth, the smouldering ashes of his hundred amours, the "sweltered venom" collected in his long years of captivity, along with his uncertain prospects and unsettled principles, had not only hardened his heart, but had given an unnatural stimulus to his understanding, which united the coherence of sanity with the cunning, power, and fury of madness. This wondrously endowed and frightfully soured nature was by the Revolution—its incidents, adventures, and characters—supplied with an abundance of food sure to turn to poison the moment it was swallowed, and to nourish into keener activity his perverted powers.

To counterbalance this strongly-stimulated, self-confident, and defiant intellect, there was little or no moral sense. Whether, as we have heard it alleged of certain characters, *omitted* in his composition, or burned out of him by the combined fires of cruelty on the part of his father, and excess on his own, we cannot say, but it did become microscopically small. Indeed, it seems to us to have been a most merciful arrangement for Mirabeau's fame, that he died before the revo-

lutionary panic had come to its height. In all probability, he would have acted the sanguinary tyrant on a larger scale than any of the terrorists; for France had come to such an apoplectic crisis, that blood must relieve her. All that was wanted was a hand unprincipled and daring enough to apply the lancet. Who bolder and more unprincipled than Mirabeau? And who had passed through such an indurating and imbiting process? Possessed of a thousand wrongs, steeled by atheism, drained of humanity, he had undoubtedly more wisdom, culture, and self-command, than his brother revolutionists, and would have been a butcher of genius, and scattered about his blood (as Virgil is said to do his dung in the Georgics) more elegantly and gracefully than they. But in him, too, slumbered the savage cruelty of a Marat, and in certain circumstances he would have been equally unscrupulous and unsparing.

Mirabeau's imagination has been lavishly panegyrised. It does not, we think, so far as we have been able to judge from the specimens we have seen, appear to have been very copious or creative. Its figures were striking and electrical in effect rather than poetical; they were always bold, but never beautiful, and seldom, though sometimes, reached the sublime. The grandest of them will be familiar to our readers: "When the last of the Gracchi expired, he flung dust towards heaven, and from this dust sprung Marius! Marius, less great for having exterminated the Cimbri, than for having prostrated in Rome the power of the nobility." A little imagination goes a far way in a Frenchman. Edmund Burke has in almost every page of his "Regicide Peace," ten images as bold and magnificent as this, not to speak of his subtle trains of thinking which underlie, or of those epic swells of sustained splendor, which Mirabeau could not have equalled in madness, in dreams, or in death.

The oratory of Mirabeau seems to have been the most imposing of his powers. Manageable and well managed as a consummate race-horse, it was fiery and impetuous as a lion from the swelling of Jordan. In the commencement of his speeches, he often hesitated and stammered; it was the fret of the torrent upon the rock, ere it rushes into its bed of wrath and power; but once launched, "torrents less rapid and less

rash." His face as of a "tiger in small-pox"—his eye blazing with the three-fold light of pride, passion, and genius—his fiery gesticulation—his voice of thunder—the strong points of war he blew ever and anon—the strong intellect, which was the solid basis below the sounding foam—all united to render his eloquence irresistible. His audiences felt, that next to the power of a great good man, inspired by patriotism, genius, and virtue, was that of a great bad man, overflowing with the Furies, and addressing Pandemonium in its own Pandemonian speech. Even the dictates and diction of mildness, sense, and mercy, as they issued from such lips, had an odd and yet awful effect. It was, indeed, greatly the gigantic but un ludicrous oddity of the man that enchanted France. Having come from prison to reign, smelling of the rank odors of dungeons, with nameless and shadowy crimes darkening the air around him, with infamous books of his composition, seen by the mind's eye dangling from his side, there he stood, rending up old institutions, thundering against kings, and deciding on the fate of millions. What figure more terribly telling and piquant could even France desire? Monster-loving she had ever been, but no such magnificent monster had ever before sprung from her soil, or roared in her senate-house. Voltaire had been an ape of wondrous gifts; but here was a Creature from beyond chaos come to bellow over her for a season, and unable and afraid to laugh, she was compelled to adore.

As an orator, few form fit subjects for comparison with Mirabeau, because few have triumphed over multitudes in spite of, nay, by means of, the infamy of their character, added to the force of their genius. Fox is no full parallel. He was dissipated, but his name never went through Europe like an evil odor, nor did he ever wield the condensed and Jove-like power of Mirabeau. He was one—and not the brightest—of a constellation: the Frenchman walked his lurid heaven alone. Sheridan was a dexterous juggler, playing a petty personal game with boy-bowls; Mirabeau trundled cannon-balls along the quaking ground. Sheridan was common-place in his vices; Mirabeau burst the limits of nature in search of pleasure, and then sat down to inoculate mankind, through his pen, with the monstrous venom. As the twitch of Brougham's nose is to the tiger face of the Frenchman, so the eccentricity of the

one to the Herculean frenzy of the other. Mirabeau most, perhaps, resembles the first Cæsar, if not in the cast of oratory, yet in private character, and in the commanding power he exerted. That power was, indeed, unparalleled; for here was a man, ruling not creation, but chaos; here was the old contest of Achilles with the rivers renewed; here was a single man grappling in turn with every subject and with every party, throwing all in succession himself, or dashing the one against the other—snatching from his enemies their own swords—hated and feared by all parties, himself hating all, but fearing none—knowing all, and himself as unknown in that stormy arena as a monarch in his inmost pavilion—dissecting all characters like a knife, himself like that knife remaining one and indivisible—and doing all this alone; for what followers, properly speaking, save a nation at a time, had Mirabeau? We hear of single men being separate “estates;” the language, as applied to *him*, has some meaning.

It has often been asked, What would have been his conduct, had he lived? Some say dogmatically, that because he was on terms with the king at the time of his death, he would have saved the monarchy; while a few suppose that he would have rode upon the popular wave to personal dominion. If it were not idle to speculate upon impossibilities, we might name it as our impression, that Mirabeau would have been, as all his life before, guided by circumstances, or impelled by passions, or overpowered by necessity, and become king’s friend, or king, as fate or madness ruled the hour. Perhaps, too, the revolution was getting beyond even his guidance. *He* might have sought to ride erect in the stirrups, and been thrown; while Marat grasped the throat and mane of the desperate animal with a grasp which death only could sever. Perhaps the monarchy was not salvable; perhaps, while seeking to conserve this ripe corn, the sickle might have cropped the huge head of the defender; perhaps the revolution, which latterly “devoured its own children,” would have devoured him, leaving him the melancholy comfort of Ulysses in the Cyclop’s cave—“Noman shall be the last to be devoured.” But all such inquiries and peradventures are for ever vain.

Mirabeau’s death was invested with dramatic interest. He died in the midst of his career; he sank like an island; he

died while all eyes in Europe were fixed upon him; he died while many saw a crown hovering over his head; he died, undiscovered, concealing his future plans in the abyss of his bosom, and able to "adjust his mantle ere he fell;" he died, reluctant less at dying, than at not being permitted to live. All his properties seemed to rise up around him as he was leaving the world. His voluptuousness must have one other full draught: "Crown me with flowers, sprinkle me with perfumes, that I may thus enter upon the eternal sleep." His levity must have one more ghastly smile: "What!" as he heard the cannon roaring, "have we the funeral ere the Achilles be dead?" His vanity must cry out, "they will miss me when I am gone. Ay, support that head; would I could leave thee it!" His wild unbelief must once more flash up like a volcano fading in the dawn: "If that sun be not God he is his cousin-german." His intellect had, perhaps, in the insight of approaching death, passed from previous uncertainty and vacillation to some great scheme of deliverance for his country; for he said, "I alone can save France from the calamities which on all sides are about to break upon her." And having thus gathered his powers and passions in full pomp around his dying couch, he bade them and the world farewell.

France had many tears to shed for him; we have not now one tear to spare. His death, indeed, was a tragedy, but not of a noble kind. It reminds us of the death of one of the evil giants in the "Pilgrim's Progress," with their last grim looks, hard-drawn breathings, and bellowings of baffled pride and fury. It was the selfish death of one who had led an intensely selfish life. What grandeur it had, sprung from its melodramatic accompaniments, and from the mere size of the departing unclean spirit. A large rotten tree falls with a greater air than a small, whose core is equally unsound. Nor was the grief of France more admirable than the death it bewailed. It was the howl of weak dependency, not of warm love. They mourned him, not for himself, but for the shade and shelter he gave *them*. Such a man must have been admired and feared, but could not have been sincerely or generally believed. Mr. Fox, on the other hand, having what Mirabeau wanted—a heart—fell amid the sincere sorrows of his very foes, and his country mourned not for itself, but for him, as one mourns for a first-born.

We were amused at Lamartine's declaration about Mirabeau : " Of all the qualities of the great man of his age, he wanted only honesty"—*a parlous want!* Robin Hood was a very worthy fellow, if he had been but honest. A great man deficient in honesty, what is he but a great charlatan, a sublime scamp, a Jove-Judas—to apply, after Mirabeau's own fashion, a compound nick-name?

Such a Jove-Judas was Mirabeau. Without principle, without heart, without religion—with the fiercest of demoniac, and the foulest of human passions mingled in his bosom—with an utter contempt for man, and an utter disbelief of God, he possessed the clearest of understandings, the most potent of wills, the most iron of constitutions, the most eloquent of tongues—united the cool and calculating understanding of an arithmetician to the frenzied energies and gestures of a Mœnad—the heart and visage of a Pluto to something resembling the sun-glory and sun-shafts of a Phœbus. Long shall his memory be preserved in the list of "Extraordinary (human) Meteors," but a still and pure luminary he can never be counted. Nay, as the world advances in knowledge and virtue his name will probably deepen in ignominy. At present, his image stands on the plain of Dura with head of gold and feet of iron, mingled with miry clay, and surrounded by not a few prostrate admirers; but we are mistaken if, by and by, there be not millions to imitate the conduct of the undeceived revolutionists (who tore down his bust,) and push him, in wrath, off his pedestal. Carlyle attributes to him with justice an "eye," but, though strong, it was not single; and is it not written, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness?"

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## NO. II.—MARAT, ROBESPIERRE, AND DANTON.

ONE obvious effect of the upheavings of a revolution is to develop latent power, and to deliver into light and influence cast-down and crushed giants, such as Danton. But another result is the undue prominence given by convulsion and anarchy to essentially small and meagre spirits, who like little



men lifted up from their feet, in the pressure of a crowd, are surprised into sudden exaltation, to be trodden down whenever their precarious propping gives way. Revolution is a genuine leveller; "small and great" meet on equal terms in its wide grave; and persons, whose names would otherwise have never met in any other document than a directory, are coupled together continually, divide influence, have their respective partisans, and require the stern crucible of death to separate them, and to settle their true position in the general history of the nation and the world.

Nothing, indeed, has tended to deceive and mystify the public mind more than the arbitrary conjunction of names. The yoking together of men in this manner has produced often a lamentable confusion as to their respective intellects and characteristics. Sometimes a mediocrity and a man of genius are thus coupled together; and what is lost by the one is gained by the other, while the credit of the whole firm is essentially impaired. Sometimes men of equal, though most dissimilar intellect, are, in defiance of criticism, clashed into as awkward a pair as ever stood up together on the floor of a country dancing school. Sometimes, for purposes of moral or critical condemnation, two of very different degrees of criminality are tied neck and heels together, as in the dreadful undistinguishing "marriages of the Loire." Sometimes the conjunction of unequal names is owing to the artifice of friends, who, by perpetually naming one favorite author along with another of established fame, hope to convince the unwary public that they are on a level. Sometimes they are produced by the pride or ambition, or by the carelessness or caprice, of the men or authors themselves. Sometimes they are the deliberate result of a shallow, though pretentious criticism, which sees and specifies resemblances, where, in reality, there are none. Sometimes they spring from the purest accidents of common circumstances, common cause, or common abode, as if a crow and a thrush must be kindred because seated on one hedge. From these, and similar causes, have arisen such combinations as Dryden and Pope, Voltaire and Rousseau, Cromwell and Napoleon, Southey and Coleridge, Rogers and Campbell, Hunt and Hazlitt, Hall and Foster, Paine and Cobbett, Byron and Shelley, or Robespierre and Danton.

In the first histories of the French Revolution, the names of Marat, Robespierre, and Danton, occur continually together as a triumvirate of terror, and the impression is left that the three were of one order, each a curious compound of the maniac and the monster. They walk on, linked in chains, to common execution, although it were as fair to tie up John Ings, Judge Jeffreys, and Hercules Furens. A somewhat severer discrimination has of late unloosed Marat from the other two, and permitted Robespierre and Danton to walk in couples.

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spit sincere venom, crawl amid general consideration too?—But we suspect, that over Carlyle's imagination the quality of greatness exerts more power than that of earnestness. A great regal-seeming ruffian fascinates him, while the petty scoundrel is trampled on. His soul rises to mate with the tiger in his power, but his foot kicks the toad before it, as it is lazily dragging its loathsomeness through the wet garden-beds. The devils, much admired as they stood on the burning marl, lose caste with him when, entering the palace of Pandemonium, they shrink into miniatures of their former selves. Mirabeau, with Carlyle, is a cracked angel; Marat, a lame and limping fiend.

Some one has remarked, how singular it is that all the heroes of the French Revolution were *ugly*. It seems as curious to us, that they were either very large or very little persons. Danton was a Titan; Mirabeau, though not so tall, was large, and carried a huge head on his shoulders; whereas Marat and Napoleon were both small men. But the French found their characteristic love of extremes gratified in all of them. Even vice and cruelty they will not admire, unless sauced by some piquant oddity, and served up in some extraordinary dish. A little, lean corporal like Napoleon, conquering the Brobdingnagian marshals and emperors of Europe, and issuing from his nut-like fist the laws of nations; a grinning death's-head like Voltaire, frightening Christendom from its propriety, were stimulating to intoxication. But their talent was gigantic, though their persons were not; whereas, Marat's mind was as mean, and his habits as low, as his stature was small, and his looks disgusting. Here, then, was the requisite French ragout in all its putrid perfection. A scarecrow suddenly fleshed, but with no heart added—his rags fluttering, and his arms vibrating in a furious wind—became, for a season, the idol of the most refined and enlightened capital in Europe.

Had we traced, as with a lover's eye, the path of some beautiful flash of lightning, passing, in its terrible loveliness, over the still landscape, and seen it omitting the church spire, which seemed proudly pointing to it as it passed—sparing the old oak, which was bending its sacrificial head before its coming—touching not the tall pine into a column of torch-like flame, but darting its arrow of wrath upon the scarecrow, in

the midst of a bean-field, and by the one glare of grandeur revealing, ere it consumed, its "looped and ragged" similitude to a man, its aspiring beggary, and contorted weakness—it would have presented us with a fit though faint image of the beautiful avenger, the holy homicide, the daughter of Nemesis by Apollo—Charlotte Corday—smiting the miserable Marat. Shaft from heaven's inmost quiver, why wert thou spent upon such a work! Why not have ranged over Europe, in search of more potent and pernicious tyrants, or, at least, have darted into the dark heart of Robespierre? Such questions are vain; for not by chance, but by decree, it came about that a death from a hand by which a demi-god would have desired to die, befell a demi-man, and that now this strange birth of nature shines on us for ever, in the light of Charlotte Corday's dagger and last triumphant smile.

Yet, even to Marat, let us be merciful, if we must also be just. A monster he was not, nor even a madman; but a manikin of some energy and acuteness, soured and crazed to a preternatural degree, and whose fury was aggravated by pure fright. He was such a man as the apothecary in "Romeo and Juliet" would have become in a revolution; but Marat, instead of dealing out small doses of death to love-sick tailors and world-wearied seamstresses, rose by the force of desperation to the summit of revolutionary power, cried out for eighty thousand heads, and died of the assault of a lovely patriotic maiden, as of a sun-stroke. And yet Shakspeare has a decided *penchant* for the caitiff wretch he so graphically paints, and has advertised his shop to the ends of the earth. So, to vary the figure, let us pity the poor vial of prussic acid, dashed down so suddenly, and by so noble a hand, whom mortals call Marat. Nature refuses not to appropriate to her bosom her spilt poisons, any more than her shed blooms—appropriates, however, only to mix them with kindlier elements, and to turn them to nobler account. And let us, in humble imitation, collect, and use medicinally, the scattered drops of poor acrid Marat.

Marat was essentially of the canaille—a bad and exaggerated specimen of the class, whom his imperfect education only contributed to harden and spoil. Robespierre and Danton belong, by birth and training, by feelings and habits, to the mid-

dle rank—Robespierre sinking, in the end, below it, through his fanaticism, and Danton rising above it, through his genius and power. Both were “limbs of the law,” though the one might be called a great toe, and the other a huge arm; and, without specifying other resemblances, while Marat lost his temper and almost his reason in the *mêlée* of the Revolution, both Robespierre and Danton preserved to the last their self-possession, their courage, and the full command of their intellectual faculties.

Robespierre reminds us much of the *worst* species of the old Covenanter—a picture of whom is faithfully drawn by Sir Walter in Burley, and in our illustrious clansman—the “gifted Gilfillan.” Such beings there did exist, and probably exist still, who united a firm belief in certain religious dogmas to the most woful want of moral principle and human feeling, and were ready to fight what they deemed God’s cause with the weapons of the devil. Their cruelties were cool and systematic; they asked a blessing on their assassinations, as though savages were to begin and end their cannibal meals with prayer. Such men were hopelessly steeled against every sentiment of humanity. Mercy to their enemies seemed to them treason against God. No adversary could escape from them. A tiger may feed to repletion, or be disarmed by drowsiness; but who could hope to appease the *ghost of a tiger*, did such walk? Ghosts of tigers, never slumbering, never sleeping, cold in their eternal hunger, pursuing their relentlessly devouring way, were the religious fanatics—the Dalziels and Claverhouses, as well as the Burleys and Mucklewraths, of the seventeenth century.

To the same order of men belonged Robespierre, modified, of course, in character and belief, by the influences of his period. The miscalled creed of the philosophers of France in the eighteenth century, which, with many of themselves, was a mere divertisement to their intellects, or a painted screen for their vices, sunk deep into the heart of Robespierre, and became a conviction and a reality with him. So far it was well; but, alas! the creed was heartless and immoral, as well as false. Laying down a wide object, it permitted every license of vice or cruelty in the paths through which it was to be gained. Robespierre became, accordingly, the worst of all

sinners—a *sinner upon system*—a political Antinomian, glorying in his shame, to whom blood itself became at last an abstraction and a shadow; the guillotine only a tremendous shuttle, weaving a well-ordered political web; and the tidings of the fall of a thousand heads agreeably indifferent, as to the farmer the news of a cleared lay or harvest field.

That Robespierre had at the first any appetite for blood, is not now asserted by his bitterest foe. That he ever even acquired such a monstrous thirst, seems to us very unlikely. His only thought would be, at the tidings of another death, "Another sacrifice to my *idea*; another obstacle lifted out of its way." Nero's wish that his enemies had but "one neck," was, we think, comparatively a humane wish. It showed that he had no delight in the disgusting details, but only in the secure result of their destruction. *He* is the unnatural monster who protracts the fierce luxury, and sips his deep cup of blood lingeringly, that he may know the separate flavor of every separate drop. Robespierre, no more than Nero, was *up* to such delicately infernal cruelty.

Carlyle frequently admits Robespierre's sincerity, and yet rates him as little other than a sham. We account for this as we did in the case of Marat. He is regarded as a small sincerity; and the sincerity of a small man contracts, to Carlyle's eye, something of the ludicrous air in which a Lilliputian warrior, shouldering his straw-sized musket, and firing his lead-drop bullets, seemed to Gulliver. "Bravo, my little hero!" shouts the historian, with a loud laugh, as he sees him, with "sky-blue breeches," patronising the houseless idea of a Divine being, "prop away at the tottering heavens, with that now nine-pin of thine; but why is there not rather a little nice doll of an image in those showy inexpressibles, to draw out, and complete the conversion of thy people? and why not say, 'These be thy Gods, O toy and toad-worshipping France?'" To bring him to respect, while he admits, the sincerity, we would need to disprove the smallness, of our Arras advocate. Now, compared to truly great men, such as Cromwell—or to extraordinary men, such as Napoleon, Mirabeau, and Danton—Robespierre was small enough. But surely it was no pigmy whose voice—calm, dispassioned, and articulate—ruled lunatic France; who preserved an icy coldness amid a land of



lava ; who mastered, though it was only for a moment, a power like the Revolution ; and who threw from his pedestal, though it was by assailing in an unguarded hour, a statue so colossal as Danton's. Rigid, Roman-like purpose—keen, if uninspired, vision—the thousand eyes of an Argus, if not the head of a Jove, or the fist of a Hercules—perseverance, honesty, and first-rate business qualities—we must allow to Robespierre, unless we account for his influence by Satanic possession, and say—“ *Either no dunce aut Diabolus.* ”—Carlyle attributes his defeat and downfall to his pertinacious pursuit of a shallow logic to its utmost consequences. Probably he thus expresses, in his own way, the view we have already sought to indicate. Robespierre was the sincere, consistent, unclean apostle of an unclean system—a system of deism in theology—of libertinism in morals—of mobocracy in politics—of a “gospel,” according to Jean Jacques,—a gospel of “liberty, equality, fraternity”—a liberty ending in general bondage, an equality terminating in the despotism of unprincipled talent, a fraternity dipping its ties in blood. With faithful, unfaltering footstep, through good report and bad report, he followed the genius of revolution in all her devious, dark, dangerous, or triumphant paths, till she at last turned round in anger, like a dogged fiend, and rent him in pieces.

In dealing with Robespierre, we feel, more than with Marat, that we are in contact with an intelligent human being, not an oddity, and mere splinter of a man. His idea *led*, and at last *dragged* him, but did not devour nor possess him. His cruelty was more a policy, and less a raging passion ; and his great moral error lay in *permitting* a theory, opposed to his original nature, to overbear his moral sense, to drain him of humanity, and to precipitate him to his doom. If he had resisted the devil, he would have fled from him.

In rising from Robespierre to Danton, we feel like one coming up from the lower plains of Sicily into its western coast—the country of the Cyclopes, with their one eye and gigantic stature ; their courage, toil, ferocity, impiety, and power.—Danton *did* tower Titanically above his fellows, and, with little of the divine, was the strongest of the earth-born. He had an “Eye,” like a shield of sight, broad, piercing, and looking

straight forward. His intellect was clear, intuitive, commanding, incapable of the theoretical, and abhorrent of the visionary. He was practical in mind, although passionate in temperament, and figurative in speech. His creed was atheism, not apparently wrought out by personal investigation, or even sought for as an opiate to conscience, but carelessly accepted, as the one he found fashionable at the time. His conduct, too, was merely the common licentiousness of his country, taking a larger shape from his larger constitution and stronger passions. His political faith was less definite and strict, but more progressive and practical, and more accommodated to circumstances than Robespierre's. His patriotism was as sincere as Robespierre's, but hung about him in more easy and voluminous folds. It was a toga, not a tunic. A sort of lazy greatness, which seemed, at a distance, criminal indifference, characterised him when in repose. His cupidity was as Cyclopean as his capacity. Nothing less than a large bribe could fill such a hand. No common goblet could satisfy such a maw. Greedy of money, for money's sake, he was not. He merely wished to live, and all Paris knew what he meant by living. And with all the royal sops to Cerberus, he remained Cerberus still. Never had he made the pretensions of a Lord Russell, or Algernon Sidney, and we know how they were subsidised. His "poverty, but not his will, consented." Had he lived in our days, a public subscription—a "Danton testimonial, all subscriptions to be handed in to the ——— office of Camille Desmoulins"—would have saved this vast needy patriot from the disgrace of taking supplies from Louis, and then laughing a wild laughter at his provider, as he hewed on at the foundations of his throne.

In fact, careless greatness, without principle, was the key to Danton's merits and faults—his power and weakness. Well did Madame Roland call him "Sardanapalus." When he found a clover field, he rolled in it. When he had nothing to do, he did nothing; when he saw the necessity of doing something immediately, he could condense ages of action into a few hours. He was like some dire tocsin, never rung till danger was imminent, but then arousing cities and nations as one man. And thus it was that he saved his country and lost himself, repulsed Brunswick, and sunk before Robespierre.

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may parody his words thus, "*Whigs* cannot breathe in France." Britain has long been their element; but France demands either colder or hotter spirits. And because the French Whigs, the Girondins, were lukewarm, they were vomited out of its volcano mouth. That balancing of opinions, that avoidance of all extremes, that reverence for the past modified by respect for the present, by the exercise of which party differences have been so frequently reconciled in this country, seem mere trifling or impertinence to the torrid revolutionary hearts in France, or even to those extreme royalist natures in her, of whom we may say that the "ground burns froze, and *frost* performs the effect of fire." And such a French Whig was Vergniaud: possessed of an impetuous and ardent nature, a fiery eloquence, and an impulsive intellect, all running in the narrow channel of his party. In Britain he would have been counted a "Whig, and something more." In France, he was reckoned a "Revolutionist, and something less;" in other words, a *weak* Revolutionist—the most fatal and miserable of all forms of weakness. A timid flash of lightning, a remorseful wave in an angry ocean, a drivelling coward among a gang of desperadoes, a lame and limping wolf among the herd descending from the Apennines upon the snow-surrounded village—such are but figures for the idea of one who pauses, halts, stammers, and makes play, amid the stern, earnest, and rushing realities of a revolution.

The Girondins were, we suspect, as a party, a set of fantastic fribbles, filled with a small fallacious thought, and without the unity or the force to impose even a shred of it upon the world. In the fine image of Grattan, "after the storm and tempest were over, they were the children of the village come forth to paddle in the streamlets." Barbaroux seems a brilliant coxcomb. Brissot was an unarmed and incapable ruffian, "who," said the dying Danton, "*would* have guillotined me as Robespierre will do." Condorcet was a clear-headed, cold-hearted, atheistic schemer. Roland was an able and honest *prig*. Louvet was a compound of sentiment and smut. The only three redeeming characters among the party were Madame Rowland, Charlotte Corday, and Vergniaud; and yet, sorry saints, in the British sense, any of these make, after all being nothing else than an elegant intriguante, with a brave

heart and a fine intellect within her, a beautiful maniac, and an orator among a thousand, without the gift of common energy or common sense.

"They sought," says Carlyle, "a republic of the virtues, and they found only one of the strengths." Danton thought otherwise, when he said, "they are all Brothers-Cain." His robust nature and Cyclopean eyesight made him recoil from the gingerbread imitation of the Romans, the factitious virtues, the elegant platitudes of language, and the affected refinements of the saloons of the Girondins. He smelt blood, with his large distended nostril, amid all their apocryphal finery. Had they succeeded, they might have gilded the guillotine, or substituted some more classical apparatus of death; but no other cement than blood could they or would they have found for their power at that crisis. At this they aimed; but while the Jacobines fought with bare rapiers, the Girondins fought with buttoned foils; while the one party threw away the scabbard, the other threw away the sword.

Vergniaud lives on account of the traditionary fame of his eloquence; his eloquence itself can hardly be said to be alive. The extracts which remain are, on the whole, diffuse and feeble. Even his famous prophecy, Ezekiel-like, of the fall of thrones, is tame in the perusal. What a contrast between his sonorous and linked harangues, and the single volcanic embers issuing from the mouth of Mirabeau or Danton, or even the nasal "I pronounce for doom," which constituted the general oratory of Robespierre! Vergniaud neither attained to the inspired monosyllables of the one, nor to the infernal croakings of the other. His speeches were, indeed, as powerful as mellifluous. It was a cataract of honey which poured from his lips. Their effect for the time was irresistible: like the songs in Pandemonium, they, for a season, "suspended hell, and took with rapture the thronging audience;" but it was only for a season. When the orator ceased to be seen and heard, his words ceased to be felt. Hence he was only able to pronounce the funeral oration of his party, not to give it any living or permanent place in the history of his country. He had the tongue, and perhaps the brain, but he wanted the profound heart and the strong hand to be the deliverer of France.



He broke at last, as breaks a wave of ocean—the most beautiful and eloquent of the deep, starred with spray, diffuse in volume—upon a jagged rock, which silently receives, repels, and extinguishes the bright invader. The echoes of his eloquence still linger, like ghosts amid the halls of history, but his name has long since faded into partial insignificance, and, in comparison with his manlier and stronger foes, has not even the sound which that of Eschines now bears beside that of Demosthenes. He fell, and, being the weaker, he could not but have fallen in the death-and-life struggle.

The account of his and the other Girondists' last night in prison is pronounced by Carlyle "not edifying." And yet, as with all last scenes, noble elements are mingled with it.—They sing "tumultuous songs;" they frame strange satiric dialogues between the devil and his living representatives; they discourse gravely about the happiness of the peoples; they talk, too, in wild and whirling words, of the immortality of the soul, and the scenes so near, beyond the guillotine and the grave. Vergniaud, like Hannibal, had secreted poison, but, as it is not enough for his friends as well as himself, therefore, "to the dogs—he'll none of it." His eloquence, too, bursts out, like an expiring flame, into glorious bravuras. If not edifying, surely this was one of the most interesting of scenes. Who can or dare reproduce it to us in words? Where now the North capable of this "Noctes?" We think Carlyle himself might, twenty years ago, have given it us, in a rough and rapid manner. As it is, "for ever undescribed let it remain."

It was intensely French. *They* never die like the wolf described by Macaulay—

"Which dies in *silence biting hard*,  
Among the *dying* hounds."

They must go out either in splendor or in stench, but both must be palpable and ostentatious. A Vergniaud, quiet, serene, meditative, lost in contemplation of the realities before him, or even saying quietly, like Thistlewood to Ings, "We shall soon know the great secret," is an incongruous conception. He must speak and sing, laugh and speculate, upon the

brink of the abyss. Might not, by the way, a panoramic view of *national deathbeds*, and how they are met and spread, tell us something about national character, and about things more important far?

Having been compelled, shortly but severely, to express our notion of Vergniaud and his abortive party, we are not, at the same time, disposed to part with either in anger. They did their best; they did their *no work* in an elegant and artistic manner; and now, like the Gracchi of ancient Rome, they are honorable, more for what they were reputed to be, than for what they effected. Let the hymn of the "Marseillaise," which the Girondists sung at the foot of the scaffold, in ghastly gradation, waxing feebler and fainter, till it died away in *one* dying throat, be their everlasting remembrancer and requiem!

"Such an act of music! Conceive it well! The yet living chant there—the chorus so rapidly wearing weak! Samson's axe is rapid; one head per minute, or little less. The chorus is worn *out*. Farewell, for evermore, ye Girondins! Te Deum! Fauchet has become silent; Valaze's dead head is lopped; the sickle of the guillotine has reaped the Girondins all away—the eloquent, the young, the beautiful, and brave! O Death, what feast is toward in thy ghastly halls?"

"Such," says Carlyle, "was the end of Girondism. They arose to regenerate France, these men, and have accomplished *this*. Alas, whatever quarrel we had with them, has not their cruel fate abolished it? Pity only survives. So many excellent souls of heroes sent down to Hades—they themselves given as a prey to dogs and all manner of birds! But here, too, the will of the Supreme Power was accomplished. As Vergniaud said, 'The Revolution, like Saturn, is devouring its own children.'"

## NO. IV.—NAPOLEON.

A VERY interesting book were a history of the histories of Napoleon—a criticism on the criticisms written about him—a sketch of his sketchers! He, who at one period of his life had the monarchs and ambassadors of Europe waiting in his antechamber, has enjoyed since a levee, larger still, of the authors, orators, and poets of the world. Who has not tried his hand at painting the marvellous mannikin of Corsica—fortune's favorite and football—nature's pride and shame—France's glory and ruin—who was arrested and flung back, when he was just vaulting into the saddle of universal dominion? What eminent author has not written either on the *pros* and *cons* of this prodigy of modern men? To name only a few: Horsley has tried on him the broad and heavy edge of his invective—Hall has assailed him with his more refined and polished indignation—Foster has held up his iron rugged hands in wonder at him—Byron has bent before him his proud knee, and become the laureate of his exile—Hazlitt has fought his cause with as much zeal and courage as if he had belonged to his old guard—Coleridge has woven his metaphysic mazes about and about him—Wordsworth has sung of him, in grave, solemn, and deprecatory verse—Southey has, both in prose and rhyme, directed against him his dignified resentment—Scott has pictured him in Don Roderick, and written nine volumes on his history—Brougham, Jeffrey, and Lockhart, have united in fascinated admiration, or fine-spun analysis of his genius—Charles Philips has set his character in his most brilliant antithesis, and surrounded his picture with his most sounding commonplaces—Croly has dashed off his life with his usual energy and speed—Wilson has let out his admiration in many a glorious gush of eloquence—the late B. Symmons has written on him some strains the world must not let die (his “Napoleon Sleeping” is in the highest style of art, and on Napoleon, or aught that was his, he could not choose but write nobly)—Channing, in the name of the freedom of the western world, has impeached him before high Heaven—Emerson has anatomised him, with keenest lancet, and calmly

reported the result—Carlyle has proclaimed him the “Hero of tools”—and, to single out two from a crowd, Thiers and Alison have told his history with minute and careful attention, as well as with glowing ardor of admiration. Time would fail us, besides, to speak of the memories, favorable or libellous—of the dramas, novels, tales, and poems, in which he has figured in primary or in partial display. Surely the man who has borne such discussion, endured such abuse, sustained such panegyric, and who remains an object of curiosity, wonder, and inquiry still, must have been the most *extraordinary* production of modern days. He must have united profundity and brilliance, splendor and solidity, qualities creating fear and love, and been such a compound of the demigod and the demon, the wise king and the tyrant, as the earth never saw before, nor is ever likely to behold again.

This, indeed, is the peculiarity of Napoleon. He was profound, as well as brilliantly successful. Unlike most conquerors, his mind was big with a great thought, which was never fully developed. He was not raised, as many have stupidly thought, upon the breath of popular triumph. It was not “chance that made him king,” or that crowned him, or that won his battles. He was a *cumulative* conqueror.—Every victory, every peace, every law, every movement, was the step of a giant stair, winding upward toward universal dominion. All was systematic. All was full of purpose. All was growingly progressive. No rest was possible. He might have noonday breathing-times, but there was no nightly repose. “Onwards” was the voice ever sounding behind him : nor was this the voice of his nation, ever insatiate for novelty and conquest ; nor was it the mere “Give, give” of his restless ambition ; it was the voice of his ideal, the cry of his unquenchable soul. He became the greatest of warriors and conquerors, or at least one of the greatest, because, like a true painter or poet, he *came down* upon the practice of his art, from a stern and lofty conception, or hypothesis, to which everything required to yield. As Michael Angelo subjected all things to his pursuit and the ideal he had formed of it, painted the crucifixion by the side of a writhing slave, and, pious though he was, would have broken up the true cross for pencils ; so Napoleon pursued *his* ideal through tempests of

death-hail and seas of blood, and looked upon poison, and gunpowder, and men's lives, as merely the box of colors necessary to his new and terrible art of war and grand scheme of conquest.

But were the art and the scheme, thus frightfully followed out, worthy and noble? Viewed in a Christian light, they hardly were. The religion of Jesus denounces war, in all save its defensive aspects. But, when we try Napoleon by human standards, and compare his scheme with that of other conquerors, both seem transcendently superb. He saw clearly that there was no alternative between the surges of anarchy and the absolute government of one master-mind. He saw that what was called "balance of power" was a feeble and useless dream, and that all things in Europe were tending either to anarchy or a new absolutism—either to the dominion of millions, or of that one who should be found a match for millions. He thought himself that one. His iron hand could, in the first place, grasp the great sceptre; and his wise and powerful mind would afterwards consolidate his dominion by just and liberal laws. "On this hint he spake"—in cannon. This purpose he pursued with an undeviating energy, which seemed, for a season, sure and irresistible as one of the laws of nature. The unity of his tactique only reflected the unity of his plan. It was just the giant club in the giant hand. Of his system of strategy, the true praise is simply that it gave a fit and full expression to his idea—it was what heroic rhyme was to Dryden, blank verse to Milton, and the Spenserian stanza to Byron.

To his scheme, and his mode of pursuing it, there occur, however, certain strong objections; but all, or nearly all, founded upon principles the truth of which *he* did not recognize. First, it is a scheme impossible. No one human arm or mind can ever govern the world. There is but One person before whom every knee shall bow, and whose lordship every tongue shall confess. Napoleon saw that there is no help for the world, but in the absolute dominance of a single mind; but he did not see that this mind, ere it can keep as well as gain dominion, and ere it can use that dominion well, must be divine. Who can govern even a child without perpetual mis-

takes? And how much less can one ungifted with divine knowledge and power govern a world?

But, secondly, Napoleon mistook the means for gaining his object. He thought himself invested with immunities which he did not possess. The being who can repeal the laws of justice and mercy—who can pursue plans of ultimate benevolence through paths of profound and blood-sprinkled darkness—who can command the Banaanites to be extirpated, and permit the people of Rabbah to be put under axes and saws of iron, and raise up base, bad, or dubious characters, to work out his holy purposes, must be a being superior to man—must be God. Whereas the man, however endowed, who violates all conventional as well as moral laws in seeking his object—who can “break open letters, tell lies, calumniate private character,” as well as assassinate and poison, must be pronounced a being in many respects inferior to mankind, a human Satan, uniting magnitude of object and of power to detestable meanness and maliciousness of character and of instrumentality. We ought, perhaps, to apologize for bringing thus, even into momentary contrast, the Governor of the universe, and his mysterious, but most righteous ways, and the reckless actions of the Emperor of the French.

A greater mistake still was committed by Napoleon, when he allied himself with the princes of Europe, when he ceased to be the soldier and the Cæsar of democracy, and when, above all, he sought to found a house, and was weak enough to believe that he could ever have a successor from his own loins equal to himself. Cromwells and Napoleons are but thinly sown, and “not transferable,” might be written on their brains. Here we see another proof of the gross miscalculation he made of his own, and indeed of human, nature. “My children must be as great as myself,” was his secret thought: otherwise, “I am God, and gods must spring from me.” But it is not in human nature to continue a hereditary series of able and wise rulers, far less a procession of prodigies. From heaven must come down the one immutable Man, who is without beginning of days or end of life, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and the days of whose years are for ever and ever.

But, thirdly taking Napoleon on his own godless ground, in seeking his great object, he neglected some important ele-

ments of success. He not only committed grave errors, but he omitted some wise and prudent steps. He reinstated the crosier and re-crowned the Pope, instead of patronizing a moderate Protestantism. He was more anxious to attack aristocrats than the *spirit* of oligarchy. He sought rather to crush than to transfuse the Jacobin element. He contrived elaborately to disguise his real purpose, to dream of his imagination, under the trappings and pretensions of vulgar ambition, and thus created a torrent of prejudice against himself. He made the contest against Russia assume the aspect of a strife between two butchers for a very fair heifer, rather than that of civilization bearding, since it could not interpenetrate, barbarism—of the hunter seeking the bear in his den. The enthusiasm he kindled was chiefly that of the love of martial glory, or of attachment to his flag and person, not of the "idea" which possessed his own breast. Hence the ardor of his army, being of the "earth, earthy," yielded quickly to the first gush of genuine patriotism which arose to oppose them, and which, though as narrow as intense, was, in comparison, fire from heaven. Perhaps, in truth, his inspiring idea was not easily communicable to such men as those he led, who, shouting "Vive la France," or "Vive l'Empereur," little imagined that he was paving, on their carcasses, his path to the title and the throne of an "Omniarch."

The theory of Napoleon, thus propounded, seems to explain some points in his character which are counted obscure. It accounts for his restless dissatisfaction with the success he did gain. What were Belgium, Holland, and Italy to him, who had formed not the mere dream, but the hope and design of a fifth monarchy? It explains his marvellous triumphs. He fought not for a paltry battle-field, nor for the possession of an island, but to gain a planet, to float his standard in the breezes of the whole earth! Hence an enthusiasm, a secret spring of ardor, a determination and a profundity of resource, which could hardly be resisted. How keen the eye, and sharpened almost to agony the intellect, of a man gambling for a world! It explains the strange gloom, and stranger gaiety, the oddness of manner, the symptoms which made many think him mad. The man, making a fool of the world, became often himself the fool of a company, who knew not be-

sides that he was the fool of an idea. The thought of universal dominion—the feeling that he was made for it, and tending to it—this made him sometimes silent when he should have spoken, and sometimes speak when he should have been silent—this was a wierd wine which the hand of his Demon poured out to him, and of which he drank without measure and in secret. It explains the occasional carelessness of his conduct—a carelessness like that of the sun, who, warming the earth and glorifying the heavens, yet sometimes scatters abroad beams which burn men's brains, and anon set corn-fields on fire. It explains the truth and tenderness, the love of justice and the gleams of compassion, which mingled with his public and private conduct. He was too wise to under-rate, and too great not to feel, the primary laws of human nature. And he intended that, when his power was consolidated, these should be the laws of *his* empire. His progress was a voyage through blood, toward mildness, peace, and justice.—But in that ocean of blood there lay an island, and in the island did that perilous voyage terminate, and to it was our daring hero chained, till his soul departed. Against *one* island had this continental genius bent all the fury and the energy of his nature, and in *another* island was he for a time imprisoned, and in a *third* island he breathed his last.

Our theory, in fine, accounts for the calm firmness with which he met his reverses. His empire, indeed, had fallen, but his idea remained intact. He might never express it in execution; but he had thrown it down on the arena of the world, and it lies still in that "court of the Gentiles." It has started anew in these degenerate days, an invigorating thought, the thought of a single ruler for this distracted earth; a thought which, like leaven, is sure to work on till it leaven all the lump; and is to be fulfilled in a way of which many men dream not. Napoleon, though he failed in the attempt, felt, doubtless, the consolation of having *made* it, and of having thereby established for himself an impersonal and imperishable glory. The reality of empire departed when he resigned; but the bright prophetic dream of empire only left him when he died, and has become his legacy to the world.

Such, we think, were Napoleon's purpose and its partial fulfilment. His powers, achievements, and private character



remain. His powers have been, on the one hand, unduly praised, and, on the other, unduly depreciated. His unexampled success led to the first extreme, and his unexampled downfall to the latter. While some have talked of him as greater than Cæsar, others think him a clever impostor, a vulgar conjurer, with one trick, which was at last discovered. Our notion lies between. He must, indeed, stand at some distance from Cæsar—the all-accomplished, the author, the orator—whose practical wisdom was equal to his genius—who wore over all his faculties, and around his very errors and crimes, a mantle of dignity—and whose one immortal bulletin, “Veni, vidi, vici,” stamps an image of the energy of his character, the power of his talents, and the laconic severity of his taste—Nor can he be equalled to Hannibal, in rugged daring of purpose, in originality of conception, in personal courage or in indomitable perseverance—Hannibal, who sprang like a bulldog at the throat of the Roman power, and who held his grasp till it was loosened in death. But neither does he sink to the level of the Tamerlanes or Bajazets. His genius soared above the sphere of such skilful marshals and martinets as Turenne and Marlborough. They were the slaves of their system of strategy; he was the king of his. They fought a battle as coolly as they played a game of chess; he was full of impulses and sudden thoughts, which became the seeds of victory, and could set his soldiers on fire, even when he remained calm himself. In our age, the name of Wellington alone can balance with his. But, admitting the Duke’s great qualities, his iron firmness, his profound knowledge of his art, and the almost superhuman tide of success which followed him, he never displayed such dazzling genius, and, without enthusiasm himself, seldom kindled it in others. He was a clear steady star; Napoleon, a blood-red meteor, whose very downfall is more interesting than the other rising. Passing from comparisons, Napoleon possessed a prodigal assortment of faculties. He had an intellect clear, rapid, and trenchant as a scimitar; an imagination fertile in resources, if incorrect in taste; a swift logic; a decisive will; a prompt and lively eloquence; and passions, in general, concentrated and quiet as a charcoal furnace. Let us not forget his wondrous faculty of silence. He could talk, but he seldom babbled, and seldom

used a word too much. His conversation was the reflex of his military tactics. As in the field he concentrated his forces on a certain strong point, which when gained, all was gained; so, in conversation, he sprung into the centre of every subject, and, tearing out its heart, left the minor members to shift for themselves. Profound in no science, save that of war, what he knew, he knew thoroughly, and could immediately turn to account. He called England a "nation of shopkeepers;" but he was as practical as a shopkeeper himself—the emperor of a shopkeeping age. Theorisers he regarded with considerable contempt. Theories he looked at, shook roughly, and asked the inexorable question, "Will they stand?" Glimpses of truth came often on him like inspiration. "Who made all that, gentlemen?" was his question at the atheistic savans, as they sailed beneath the starry heavens, and denied the Maker. The misty brilliance, too often disguising little, of such a writer as Madame de Stael was naught in his eyes. How, had he been alive, would he have laughed over the elegant sentimentalism of Lamartine, and with a strong contemptuous breath blown away, like rolled shavings, his finest periods!—Yet he had a little corner of literary romance in his heart. He loved Ossian's Poems. For this his taste has been questioned; but to literary taste Napoleon did not pretend. He could only criticise the arrangements of a battle, was the author of a new and elegant art of bloodshed, and liked a terribly terse style of warfare. But, in Ossian, he found fire amid fustian; and partly for the fustian, and partly for the fire, he loved him. In fact, Ossian is just a Frenchified version of Homer; and no wonder that it pleased at once Napoleon's martial spirit and his national taste. The ancient bard himself had been too simple. M'Pherson served him up with flummery, and he went sweetly down the throat of our melodramatic Hero.

Napoleon's real writings were his battles. Lodi let us call a wild and passionate ode; Austerlitz an epic; and Waterloo a tragedy. Yet, amid the bombast and falsetto of his bulletins and speeches, there occur coals of genuine fire, and gleams of lofty genius. Every one remembers the sentence, "Frenchmen, remember that from the top of these pyramids forty centuries look down upon your actions;" a sentence enough to

make a man immortal. In keeping with the genius discovered in this, were his allusions to the "sun of Austerlitz," which, as if to the command of another Joshua, seemed to stand still at his bidding—his belief in destiny, and the other superstitions which, like bats in a mid-day market-place, flitted strangely to and fro through the clear and stern atmosphere of his soul, and prophesied in silence of change, ruin and death.

Like all men of his order, Napoleon was subject to moods and fits, and presents thus, in mind, as well as in character, a capricious and inconsistent aspect. Enjoying the keenest and coldest of intellects, and the most iron of wills, he had at times the fretfulness of a child, and at other times, the fury of a demon. He was strong, but surrounded by contemptible weaknesses. Possessing the French empire, he seemed himself at times "possessed"—now of a miserable imp, and now of a master-fiend. Now almost a demigod, he is anon an idiot. Now organising and executing with equal wisdom and energy complicated and stupendous schemes, he falls frequently into blunders which a child might have avoided. You are reminded of a person of majestic stature and presence, who is suddenly seized with St. Vitus's Dance. How strange the inconsistencies and follies of genius! But not a Burns, seeing two moons from the top of a whisky-barrel—nor a Coleridge, dogged by an unemployed operative, to keep him out of a druggist's shop—nor a Johnson, standing in the rain to do penance for disobedience to his father—nor a Hall, charging a lady to instruct her children in the belief of ghosts—nor a Byron, shaving his brow to make it seem higher than it was, or contemplating his hands, and saying, "These hands are white"—is a more striking specimen of the follies of the wise, of the alloys mingled with the "most fine gold," than a Napoleon, now playing for a world, and now cheating one of his own officers at whist.

We sometimes envy those who were privileged to be contemporaries of the battles of Napoleon, and the novels of Sir Walter Scott, while each splendid series was yet in progress. The first Italian campaign might have made the blood of Burke (opposed though he was) dance on his very death-bed, for there he was lying at the time. And how grand, for a

poetic ear, to have heard the news of Jena, and Austerlitz, and Wagram, and Borodino, succeeding each other like the boom of distant cannon, like the successive peals of a thunder-storm! Especially when that dark cloud of invasion had gathered around our own shores, and was expected to burst in a tempest of fire, how deep must have been the suspense, how silent the hush of the expectation, and how needless, methinks, sermons, however eloquent, or poems, however spirit-stirring, to concentrate, or increase, or express, the land's one vast emotion!

Looking back, even now, upon the achievements of Napoleon, they seem still calculated to awaken wonder and fear—*wonder* at their multitude, their variety, their dreamlike pomp and speed, their power and terrible beauty, and that they did not produce a still deeper impression upon the world's mind, and a still stronger reverberation from the world's poetry and eloquence; and *fear*, at the power sometimes lent to man, at its abuse, and at the possibilities of the future.—Another Napoleon may rise, abler, wickeder, wiser, and may throw heavier barricades of cannon across the path of the nations, crush them with a rougher rod, may live to consolidate a thicker crust of despotism over the world, may fight another Austerlitz without a Waterloo, and occupy another St. Cloud without another St. Helena; for what did all those far-heard cannon proclaim, but “How much is possible to him that dareth enough, that feareth none, that getteth a giant's power, and useth it tyrannously like a giant—that can by individual might, reckless of rights, human or divine, rise and ride on the topmost billow of his age?”\*

In looking more closely and calmly at those battles of Napoleon, we have a little, though not very much, of misty exaggeration and false glory to brush away. Latterly, they lose greatly that air of romance and miracle which surrounded the first campaigns of Italy. The boy, who had been a prodigy, matures into the full grown and thoroughly furnished man. The style, which had been somewhat florid but very fresh and powerful, becomes calmer and rather less rapid. Napoleon,

\* This paragraph, written early in 1851, has since received two emphatic comments—need we name Louis Napoleon and Nicholas?

who had fought at first with an energy that seemed desperation, with a fire that seemed superhuman, against great odds of experience and numbers, fights now with many advantages on his side. He is backed by vast, trained, and veteran armies. He is surrounded by generals only inferior to himself, and whom he has himself reared. And, above all; he is preceded by the Gorgon-headed Medusa of his fame, carrying dismay into the opposing ranks, nerving his own men into iron, and stiffening his enemies into stone. And, although longer and sterner ever became the resistance, the result of victory was equally sure. And now he has reached a climax; and yet, not satisfied therewith, he resolves on a project, the greatest and most daring ever taken or even entertained by him. It is to disturb the Russian bear in his forests. For this purpose, he has collected an army, reminding you of those of Jenghiz Khan or Tamerlane, unparalleled in numbers, magnificent in equipment, unbounded in confidence and attachment to their chief, led by officers of tried valor and skill, and wielded and propelled by the genius of Napoleon, like one body by one living soul. But the "Lord in the heavens did laugh;" the Lord held him and his force "in derision." For now his time was fully come. And now must the decree of the Watchers and the Holy Ones, long registered against him, begin to obtain fulfillment. And how did God fulfill it? He led him into no ambuscade. He overwhelmed him with no superior force. He raised up against him no superior genius. But he took his punishment into his own hand. He sent winter before its time, to destroy him and his "many men so beautiful." He loosened snow, like a flood of waters, and frost, like a flood of fire, upon his host; and Napoleon, like Satan, yielded to God alone, and might have exclaimed, with that lost archangel—

"Into what pit thou seest,  
From what height fallen, so much the stronger proved  
He with his thunder, and, till then, who knew  
*The force of those dire arms?"*

Thus had man and his Maker come into collision, and the potsherd was broken in the unequal strife. All that followed resembled only the convulsive struggles of one down, taken; and bound. Even when cast back like a burning ember, from

Elba to the French shores, it was evidently all too late. His 'star' had first paled before the fires of Moscow, and at last set amid the snows of his flight from it.

Of the private character of Napoleon, there are many contradictory opinions. Indeed, properly speaking, he had no private character at all. For the greater part of his life, he was as public as the sun. He ate and drank, read and wrote, snuffed and slept in a glare of publicity. The wrinkles, darkening into gloom, on that massive forehead, did indeed conceal many a dark and secret thought; but his mere actions and habitudes were all public property. How tell what he was in private, since in private he never was? He was like the man who had "lost his shadow." No sweet relief, no dim and tender background in his character. Whatever private virtues he might have possessed, never found an atmosphere to develop them in; nay, they withered and died in the surrounding sunshine. He had no time to be a good son, or husband, or father, or friend. The idea which devoured him devoured all such ties too. Still, we believe that he never ceased to possess a heart, and that much of his apathy and apparent hardness of nature was the effect of policy or of absence of mind. A thousand different spectators report differently of his manner in private. To some, he appeared all grace and dignity—to others, a cold, absent fiend, lost in schemes of far-off villany—to a third class, an awkward and unmannered blunderer—and to a fourth, the very demon of curiosity, a machine of questions, an embodied inquisition.—One acute spectator, the husband of Madame Rahel, reports a perpetual scowl on his brow, and a perpetual smile on his lips. We care very little for such representations, which rather describe the man's moods than the man himself. We heard once, we protest, a more edifying picture of him from the lips of a Scotch innkeeper, who declared that he believed "Boney, when he was at leisure, aye sat, wi' his airm in a bowl o' water, resting on a cannon-ball, an' nae doubt meditaunting mischief!" 'T were difficult to catch the features of an undeveloped thought—and what else was Napoleon?

As concentration was the power of his mind, so it was the peculiarity of his person. His body was a little vial of intense existence. The thrones of Europe seemed falling before

a ninopin ! He seemed made of skin, marrow, bone and fire. Had France been in labor, and brought forth a mouse ? But it was a frame formed for endurance. It took no punishment, it felt no fatigue, it refreshed itself by a wink, its tiny hand shivered kingdoms at a touch, and its voice, small as the "treble of a fay," was powerful and irresistible as the roar of Mars, the homicidal god. Nature is often strange in her economies of power. She often packs her poisons and her glorious essences alike into small bulk. In Napoleon, as in Alexander the Great and Alexander Pope, a portion of both was strangely and inextricably mingled.

We might deduce many lessons from this rapid sketch of the Emperor of the French. That "moral of his story," of which Symmons speaks, would require seven thunders fully to express it. We will not dwell on the common-places about "vaulting ambition," "diseased pride," "fallen greatness," "lesson to be humble and thankful in our own spheres," and so on. Napoleon was a brave, great man ; in part mistaken, perhaps also in part insane, and also in a large part guilty. But he did a work—not his full work, but still a work that he only could have accomplished. He continued that shaking of the sediments of the nations, which the French Revolution began. He pointed attention with his bristling guns to the danger the civilization of Europe is exposed to from the *Russian silent conspiracy of ages—cold, vast, quietly progressive, as a glacier gathering round an Alpine valley*. He shook the throne of the Austrian domination, and left that of his own successors tottering to receive them. He drew out, by long antagonism, the resources of Britain. He cast a ghastly smile of contempt, which lingers still, around the papal crown. While he proved the disadvantages, as well as advantages, of the domination of a single human mind, he unconsciously shadowed forth the time when one divine hand shall take the kingdom—his empire, during its palmy days, forming a feeble earthly emblem of the reign of the Universal King.

A new Napoleon, were he rising, would not long continue to reign. But even as the ancient polypharmist and mistaken alchemist was the parent and the prophecy of those modern chemists, who may yet advance the science even to its ideal limits, so in this age, Napoleon has been the unwitting pioneer

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and imperfect prophet of a Sovereign, the extent and the duration of whose kingdom shall equal and surpass his wildest dreams. Did he, by sheer native genius, nearly snatch from the hands of all kings their time-honored sceptres—nearly confirm his sway into a concentrated and iron empire—and prove the advantages of centralization, as they were never proved before? And *why* should not “another king, one Jesus,” exerting a mightier might, obtain a more lasting empire, and form the only real government which, save the short theocracy of the Jews, ever existed on earth? We pause—nay, nature, the world, the church, poor afflicted humanity, distracted governments, falling thrones, earth and heaven together, seem to pause with us, to hear the wherefore to this why.



# A Constellation of Sacred Authors.



## NO. I.—EDWARD IRVING.

WE have often asked, and have often too, of late, the question asked us, Why have we no life of Edward Irving? Why no full or authentic record of that short, eccentric, but most brilliant and instructive career? What has become of his papers, which, we believe, were numerous—of his sermons, private letters, and journal? (if such a thing as a journal he ever kept—think of the journal of a comet!) Why have none of his surviving friends been invited to overlook these, and construct from them a life-like image of the man? Or, failing them, why has not some literary man of eminence—even although not imbued with all Irving's peculiar opinions, yet, if possessing a general and genial sympathy with him—been employed on the task? We know that many think this arises from the impression that Irving died under a cloud, being felt by his admirers to be general. But does not the silence of his relatives and friends serve to deepen this impression? We have heard it hinted, on the other hand, that the real reason is connected with the peculiar views of Irving, some imagining that no man can write his life well, if not what is called an Irvingite, and that no Irvingite has the literary qualifications. These statements, however, we do not believe. Some of the Irvingites are men of very considerable talent, and why—although most of his very eminent literary friends be either dead or have departed farther and farther from his point of view—although Chalmers be gone, De Quincey otherwise occupied, Thomas Carlyle become a proclaimed Pantheist, and Thomas

Erskine, of Linlathen, ceased to lay much if any stress on the Personal Reign, and forsaken other Irvingite peculiarities—does not some one of his own party attempt a biography of this eagle-winged man? Meanwhile, we propose to give what we know to be an honest and believe to be a true outline of his character and peculiar genius.

We have had not a few disappointments in our career, but none in one small department—that of sight-seeing and hero-hearing—equal to that which befell us in Edinburgh, in the year 1834. We were told that Edward Irving was to hold forth in Mr. Tait's chapel, Canongate, on the forenoon of a February Sabbath-day. We went accordingly, and with some difficulty procured standing room in the gallery of a small chapel in an obscure and very dirty close. It was not he! The lofty, once black, but now blanched head did not appear over the throng, like the white plume of a chieftain over the surge of battle. Another came—(good Mr. Tait, who had left the sweet moorland solitudes of Tealing, and resigned his living to follow Irving)—and we never had another opportunity of seeing and hearing the giant of pulpit oratory. In the close of that year he died in Glasgow, a weary, worn, grey-headed, and broken-hearted man of forty-two.

What a life his had been! Short, if years are the only measurement of time; but long, if time be computed by the motion of the higher stars of thoughts, feelings, and sorrows! His life, too, was a strangely blended one. It was made up of violent contrasts, contradictions, and vicissitudes. At college his career was triumphant; he carried all easily before him. Then, after he obtained license, came two great reverses—unpopularity as a preacher, and, if general report be credited, a love-disappointment. He was discouraged by these to the extent of preparing to leave his native land, and undertake the duties of a missionary to the heathen. In this case he would probably have perished early, and his fame had been confined to the corner of an obituary in a missionary magazine. Then in a moment—whether fortunate or unfortunate, how shall we decide?—Chalmers heard him preach, and got him appointed as his colleague in Glasgow. Then London rose up to welcome him, as one man, and his pulpit became a throne of power, reminding you of what Knox's was in Edinburgh in

the sixteenth century. Not since that lion-hearted man of God had thundered to nobles and maids of honor, to senators and queens, had any preacher in Britain such an audience to command and such power to command it as Irving. There were princes of the blood, ladies high in honor and place, ministers of state, celebrated senators, orators, and philosophers, poets, critics, and distinguished members of the bar and of the church, all jostled together into one motley yet magnificent mass, less to listen and criticise, than to prostrate themselves before the one heroic and victorious man; for it seemed rather a hero of chivalry than a divine who came forward Sabbath after Sabbath to uplift the buckler of faith, and to wield the sword of the Spirit. The speaker was made for the audience, the man for the hour. In Glasgow he was an eagle in a cage; men saw strength, but strength imprisoned and embarrassed. In London, he found a free atmosphere, and eyes worthy of beholding his highest flight, and he *did*—"ye stars! how he did soar." It was a flight prompted by enthusiasm, sustained by sympathy, accelerated by ambition, and consecrated by Christian earnestness. There might be indeed a slight or even a strong tinge of vanity mingled with his appearances, but it was not the vanity of a fribble, it was rather that of a child. It was but skin deep, and did not affect the simplicity, enthusiasm, and love of truth which were the bases of his character and of his eloquence. His auditors felt that this was no mouthing, ranting, strutting actor, but a great good man, speaking from a full intellect and a warm heart; and that if he had, and knew that he had, a strange and striking personal presence, and a fine deep voice thoroughly under his management, and which he wielded with all the skill of an artist, that was not his fault. These natural and acquired advantages he could not resign, he could not but be aware of, he must use, and he did consecrate. What less and what more could he have done?

We have heard him so often described by eyewitnesses, not to speak of the written pictures of the period, that we may venture on a sketch of a Sabbath, during his palmy days, in the Caledonian Chapel. You go a full hour before eleven, and find that you are not too early. Having forced your way with difficulty into the interior, you find yourself in a nest

of celebrities. The chapel is small, but almost every person of note or notoriety in London has squeezed him or herself into one part or another of it. There shine the fine open glossy brow and speaking face of Canning. There you see the small shrimp-like form of Wilberforce, the dusky visage of Denman, the high Roman nose of Peel, and the stern forehead of Plunket. There Brougham sits coiled up in his critical night, his nose twitching, his chin resting on his hand, his eyes retired under the dark lids, his whole bearing denoting eager but somewhat curious and sinister expectation. Yonder you see an old venerable man with mild placid face and long grey hair; it is Jeremy Bentham, coming to hear his own system abused as with the tongue of thunder. Near him, note that thin spiritual-looking little old individual, with quiet philosophic countenance and large brow: it is William Godwin, the author of "Caleb Williams." In a seat behind him sits a yet more meagre skeleton of man, with a pale face, eager eyes, dark close-cropped hair and tremulous nervous aspect; it is the first of living critics, William Hazlitt, who had "forgot what the inside of a church was like," but who has been fairly dragged out of his den by the attraction of Irving's eloquence. At the door, and standing, you see a young, short, stout person, carrying his head high, with round face, large eyes, and careless school-boy bearing: it is Macauley, on furlough from Cambridge, where he is as yet a student, but hopes soon to be equal with the proudest in all that crowded Caledonian Chapel. And in a corner of the church, Coleridge—the mighty wizard, with more knowledge and more genius under that one white head than is to be found in the whole of the bright assembly—looks with dim nebulous eyes upon the scene, which seems to him rather a swimming vision than a solid reality. And then, besides, there are belted earls, and feathered duchesses, and bishops not a few, and one or two of the Guelphic race included in a throng which has not been equalled for brilliance in London since Burke, Fox, and Sheridan stood up in Westminster Hall, as the three accusing spirits of Warren Hastings.

For nearly half an hour the audience has been fully assembled, and has maintained, on the whole, a decent gravity and composure. Eleven o'clock strikes, and an official appears,

bearing the Bible in his hands, and thus announcing the approach of the preacher. Ludicrous as might in other circumstances seem the disparity between the forerunner and the coming Man, his appearance is welcomed by the rustle and commotion which pass through the assembly, as if by a unanimous cheer—a rustle which is instantly succeeded by deep silence, as, slowly and majestically, Edward Irving advances, mounts—not with the quick hasty step of Chalmers, but with a measured and dignified pace, as if to some solemn music heard by his ear alone—the stairs of the pulpit, and lifting the Psalm-book, calmly confronts that splendid multitude. The expression of his bearing while he does this is very peculiar; it is not that of fear, not that of deference, still less is it that of impertinence, anger or contempt. It is simply the look of a man who says internally, “I am equal to this occasion and to this assembly, in the dignity and power of my own intellect and nature, and more than equal to it, in the might of my Master, and in the grandeur and truth of my message.” Ere he proceeds to open the Psalm-book, mark his stature and his face! He is a son of Anak in height, and his symmetry and apparent strength are worthy of his stature. His complexion is iron grey, his hair is parted at the foretop, and hangs in sable masses down his temples, his eye has a squint, which rather adds to than detracts from the general effect, and his whole aspect is spiritual, earnest, Titanic; yea, that of a Titan among Titans—a Boanerges among the sons of thunder. He gives out the psalm—perhaps it is his favorite psalm, the twenty-ninth—and as he reads it, his voice seems the echo of the “Lord’s voice upon the waters,” so deep and far-rolling are the crashes of its sound. It sinks, too, ever and anon into soft and solemn cadences, so that you hear in it alike the moan and the roar, and feel both the pathos and the majesty of the thunderstorm. Then he reads a portion of Scripture, selecting probably, from a fine instinctive sense of contrast, the twenty-third psalm, or some other of the sweeter of the Hebrew hymns, to give relief to the grandses that have passed or that are at hand. Then he says, “Let us pray,” not as a mere formal preliminary, but because he really wishes to gather up all the devotional feeling of his hearers along with his own, and to present it as a whole burnt-offering to

Heaven. Then his voice, "like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," rises to God, and you feel as if God had blotted out the Church around, and the Universe above, that that voice might obtain immediate entrance to his ear. You at least are conscious of nothing for a time save the voice and the Auditor. ("Reverence and lowly prostration are most striking," it has been said, "when paid by a lofty intellect, and you are reminded of the *trees of the forest clapping their hands* unto God.") The prayer over, he announces his text, and enters on his theme. The sermon is upon the days of the Puritans and the Covenanters, and his blood boils as he describes the earnest spirit of their times. He fights over again the battles of Drumclog and Bothwell; he paints the dark muirlands, whither the Woman of the Church retired for a season to be nourished with blood, and you seem to be listening to that wild eloquence which pealed through the wilderness and shook the throne of Charles II. Then he turns to the contrast between that earnest period and what he thinks our light, empty, and profane era, and opens with fearless hand the vials of apocalyptic vengeance against it. He denounces our "political expediences," and Canning smiles across to Peel. He speaks of our "godless systems of ethics and economics," and Bentham and Godwin shrug their shoulders in unison. He attacks the poetry and the criticism of the age, inserting a fierce diatribe against the patrician Byron in the heart of an apology for the hapless ploughman Burns; knocking Southey down into the same kennel into which he had plunged Byron; and striking next at the very heart of Cobbett; and Hazlitt bends his brow into a frown, and you see a sarcasm (to be inserted in the next "Liberal") crossing the dusky disc of his face. Nay, waxing bolder, and eyeing the peers and the peeresses, the orator denounces the "wickedness in high places" which abounds, and his voice swells into its deepest thunder, and his eye assumes its most portentous glare, as he characterises the falsehood of courtiers, the hypocrisy of statesmen, the hollowness, licentiousness, and levity of fashionable life, singling out an individual notoriety of the species, who happens to be in more immediate sight, and concentrating the "terrors of his beak, the lightnings of his eye," upon her till she blushes through her rouge, and every feather in her head-dress palpitates in reply

to her rotten and quaking heart. It is Isaiah or Ezekiel over again, uttering their stern yet musical and poetic burdens. The language is worthy of the message it conveys, not polished, indeed, or smooth, rather rough and diffuse withal, but vehement, figurative, and bedropt with terrible or tender extracts from the Bible. The manner is as graceful as may well co-exist with deep impetuous force, and as solemn as may evade the charge of cant. The voice seems meant for an "orator of the human race," and fitted to fill vaster buildings than earth contains, and to plead in mightier causes and controversies than can even be conceived of in our degenerate days. It is the "many-folded shell" of Prometheus, including in its compass "soft and soul-like sounds," as well as loud and victorious peals. The audience feel in contact, not with a mere orator, but with a Demoniac force.

That this sketch is not exaggerated, we have abundant testimony. Canning repeatedly declared that Edward Irving was the most powerful orator, in or out of the pulpit, he ever heard. Hazlitt has written panegyric after panegyric upon him, annexing, indeed, not a few critical cavils and sarcasms, as drawbacks from his estimate. De Quincey called him once to us a "very demon of power," and uniformly in his writings speaks with wonder, not unmingled with terror, of the fierce, untamed, resistless energy which ran in the blood and spoke in the talk and public oratory of Edward Irving.

Yet there can be little doubt that these splendid exhibitions, while exciting general admiration in London, were not productive of commensurate good. They rather dazzled and stupified, than convinced or converted. They sent men away wondering at the power of the orator, not mourning over their own evils, and striving after amendment. They served, to say the most, only as a preface, paving the way for a volume of instruction and edification, which was never published; as an introduction, to secure the attention and gain the ear of the public, for a sermon, and an application thereof of practical power, which was never preached.

Irving, indeed, left himself no choice. He had so fiercely and unsparingly assaulted the modes of thought and styles of preaching which prevailed in the Church, that he was compelled, in consistency and self-defence, to aim at a novel and

original plan of promulgating the old doctrines. By and by, intercourse with Coleridge, added to his own restless spirit of speculation, began to shake his confidence in many parts of our ancient creeds. A new system, of colossal proportions, founded, indeed, on the basis of Scripture, but ascending till its summits were lost in mist, began to rise under his Babylonian hand. He saw, too, for the first time, the mountain-ranges of prophecy lowering before him, dark and cloud-girt for the most part, but with strange gleams shining here and there upon their tops, and with pale and shadowy hands beckoning him onwards into their midst. These were to him the *Delectable Mountains*, and to gain the summit of Mount Clear became henceforth the object of his burning and lifelong ambition. He toiled up these hills for many a weary hour and with many a heavy groan, but his strong faith and sanguine genius supported him; in the evening of each laborious day he fancied he saw, on the unreachd pinnacle,

“ Hope enchanted smile, and wave her golden hair;”

and each new morning found him as alert as ever, climbing the mountains towards the city. Again and again, he imagined that he had reached the far-seen and far-commanding summit, and certainly the exaltation of his language, and the fervor of his spirit, seemed sometimes those of one who was beholding a “ little of the glory of the place;” but, alas! the clouds were perpetually gathering again, and many maintained that the shepherds Watchful and Experience (whatever Sincero might have done) had not bid him “ welcome to the Delectable Mountains,” and that he had mistaken Mount Clear for Mount Error, which hangs over a steep precipice, and whence many strong men have been hurled headlong, and dashed to pieces at the bottom.

It was certainly a rapid, a strange, a fearful “ progress,” that of our great-hearted pilgrim during the ten last years of his life. What giants he wrestled with and subdued—what defiles of fear and danger he passed—what hills of difficulty as well as of delight he surmounted—what temptations he resisted and defied—what by-paths, alas! too, at times he was led to explore! All subjects passed before him like the animals coming to be named of Adam, and were scanned and



classified, if not exhausted; all methods of "concluding" men into the obedience of his form of the faith were tried;—now he "piped" his Pan's pipe to the mighty London, that its inhabitants might dance; now he "mourned" to them his wild prophetic wail, that they might lament. All varieties of character he met with and sought to gain—all places he visited—all varieties of treatment and experience he encountered and tried to turn to high spiritual account. We see him now preaching among the wildernesses of Galloway, and seeming a Renwick Redivivus, and now, Samson-like, overthrowing the Church of Kirkcaldy, by the mere pressure produced by his popularity. Now he is seen by Hazlitt laying his giant limbs on a bench in the lobby of the Black Bull, Edinburgh; and now, at five in the morning, in the same city, ere the sun has climbed the back of the couchant lion of Arthur Seat, or turned the flag floating o'er the Castle into fire, he is addressing thousands in the West Church on the glorious and dreadful advent of a Brighter Sun from heaven. Now we see him (as our informant did) sitting at his own hospitable morning board, surrounded by a score of disciples, holding a child on his knee, a tea-pot in his hand, and, with head and shoulders towering over the rest, pouring out the while the strong element of his conversation. Now we watch him shaking farewell hands with Carlyle, his early friend, whom he has in vain sought to convert to his views, and saying with a sigh, "I must go up this hill Difficulty; thou art in danger of reaching a certain wide field, full of dark mountains, where thou mayest stumble and fall, and rise no more." Now he pleads his cause before the judicatories of the Church of Scotland where he is sisted for error, but pleads it in vain; and in the afternoon of the day on which he has been cast out from her pale, stands up with tears in his eyes, and preaches the gospel in his own native Annan to weeping crowds. Now he prevents the dawning to translate "Ben Ezra" into English, and to prefix to it that noble apology for the Personal Advent, which a Milton's ink might have written and a martyr's blood sealed. Now he appears, after years of estrangement, before the view of his ancient ally, Carlyle, suddenly as an apparition, in one of the parks, grey-haired with anguish, pale and thin as a spectre, blasted, but blasted with celestial

fire, and they renew friendly intercourse for one solemn hour, and then part for ever. And now he expires in Glasgow, panting to keep some dream-made appointment in Edinburgh, whither he was bound, but saying at last, with childlike resignation, "Living or dying, I am the Lord's."

From his life, thus cursorily outlined, we pass to say a few words about his works, and genius, and purpose. In comparing the divines of the seventeenth century with those of our own day, there is nothing more remarkable than this—the vastly greater amount of *good* literature produced by the former. They were not, to be sure, so much engrossed with soirées, Exeter-Hall meetings, and visits, as the present race; but their pulpit preparations were far more laborious, and yet they found time for works of solid worth and colossal size. Our divines, too, are determined to print, but what flimsy productions theirs in general are, in comparison with the writings of Howe, Charnock, Barrow, and Taylor! There is more matter in ten of Charnock's massive folio pages, than in all that Dr. Cumming has hitherto published. Chalmers and Irving, of course, are writers of a higher order, but even their works cannot be named beside those of our elder theologians, whether in learning, in genius, in power, in practical effect, or even in polish. In proof of our statement, we invite comparison between Chalmers's "Astronomical Discourses" or Irving's "Orations" and the "Christian Life" by old John Scott; and, waiving the question as to which of the three possesses the greatest intellectual power and eloquence, we challenge superiority on behalf of the elder, even in respect of correctness, grace, and every minor merit of style. Vain to say that the works of Chalmers and Irving were written in the intervals of varied and harassing occupations. So were those of the old divines. Vain to say that in the Scottish schools and colleges, at the beginning of this century, little attention was paid to composition—in the schools and colleges of the seventeenth century we believe there was still less. The true reasons are to be found in the simple fact, that these olden men were men of a still higher order of intellect—that, besides, they had more thoroughly trained themselves, and that a still loftier earnestness in their hearts was strengthened and inflamed by the influences of a sterner age. As Milton

to Bailey and Tennyson, do Howe and Barrow stand to Chalmers and Irving.

Yet we mean not to deny that some of Irving's productions are worthy, not only of his floating reputation, but of that gift in him which was never fully developed, or at least never completely displayed. In all his writings you see a man of the present wearing the armor of the past; but it is a proof of his power, that, although he wears it awkwardly, he never sinks under the load. It is not a David clad in a Goliath's arms, and overwhelmed by them; it is the shepherd-giant, Eliab, David's brother, not yet at home in a panoply which is not too large for his limbs, but for wearing which a peaceful profession and period had not prepared him. Irving, in native power, was only, we think, a little lower than the men of the Elizabethan period, and of the next two reigns. He was originally of a similar order of genius, but he had given that genius a less severe and laborious culture, and he had fallen upon an age adverse for its display. Hence, even his best writings, when compared to theirs, have a certain stiff, imitative, and convulsive air. There is nothing false in any of them, but there is something *forced* in most. You feel always how much better Irving's noble, generous thoughts would have looked, had he expressed them in the language of his own day. Burke had as big a heart, a far subtler intellect, and richer imagination than Irving, and yet how few innovations, and fewer archaisms, has he ventured to introduce into his style. Hall and Foster, too, are as pure writers as they are powerful thinkers. Thus, too, felt the public, and hence the boundless popularity of the man was not transferred to his books. His two best productions are, unquestionably, his Prefaces to "Horne on the Psalms," and to "Ben Ezra." Nothing can be finer than his defence of David, and his panegyric—*itself* a lyric—on his psalms in the former, and the apostolic dignity, depth, and earnestness, which distinguish the latter. Why are these, and some of his other smaller works, not reprinted?

The genius of Irving was not of the purely poetical sort, it was rather of that lofty degree of the oratorical which verges on the poetical. In other words, it was more intense than wide. His mind was deeper than that of Chalmers, but not so broad or so genial—it was in some departments more pow-

erful, but not so practical. Many of his ideas, he rejoiced to see, as he said, "looming through a mist." Even the poetry that was in him was rather of the lyrical, than of the epic or dramatic sort. The lyrical poet does not look abroad upon universality—he looks straight up from his lyre—some intense idea at once insulates and inflames him, and his poetry arises bright, keen, and narrow, as a tongue of fire from the altar of a sacrifice. It was so with the prose of Irving; his flights were lofty, perpendicular, and short-lived. He has left very few of those long, swelling, sustained, and victorious passages which characterise the very highest of our religious authors, nor, on the other hand, are his pages thick with sudden and memorable felicities of thought. They are chiefly valuable for those brief patches of beauty, and bursts of personal feeling and passion, which recall most forcibly to those who heard him the remarkable appearance and unequalled elocution of the man. For, emphatically, he himself was "the Epistle." We admit most frankly, even though the admission should have the effect of producing distrust in our own capacity of criticising one whom we never saw, that, to know his genius fully, it was necessary to have seen and heard him—only those who did so are, we believe, able to appreciate the whole power that was condensed in that marvellous "earthen vessel," the appearance of which, especially in his loftier moods, suggested an energy within, and a possibility before him, which made his works, and even his public preachings, seem poor in the comparison. Let us remember, too, the age at which he was removed. He was barely forty-two, an age when nine-tenths of clever men have not even begun to publish. And he had advanced at such a rate. It was true that latterly he fell into a singular hallucination, or, at least, a one-sidedness. A gentleman told us, that, calling on him once, and complaining that his published writings were not quite worthy of his fame, Irving pointed to a mass of MS. below his study table, and said, "Look here, sir! There are there scores of sermons incomparably superior to aught I have published. But when I wrote them I was under the impression that I must fight God's cause with the weapons of eloquence and carnal wisdom; I have learned otherwise since, sir, and believe that the simpler and humbler I am in my language, God will prosper my ser-

mons and writings more; according to that Scripture, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.'" So far he was right, but so far also he was wrong; and in a short time, had he lived, he would have come to the golden mean. No preacher can be too simple, and none too sublime. Every preacher, who is able, should, by turns, be both. No writer can be too clear, and none too profound; and every writer should seek, if he has capacity, to be both. The author of that little card to Philemon, wrote also the Epistle to the Romans. Irving might, and would, had God spared his life, have attained a mode of writing, which, by turns, would have attracted infants, and overpowered philosophers—made a Mary weep and a Felix tremble—a child, like Timothy, prefer it to the instructions of his grandmother Lois, and a doubter, like Thomas, cry out, "My Lord and my God."

To enter into a consideration of his creed, we have not room, and it might besides involve us in controversy. In some points we deem him to have been deeply and even fearfully mistaken, and his wildest errors, of course, were most popular among the weak; but in others, if he was in error, his errors were not deadly, and he erred in good company. But, whatever were or were not his mistakes, of one thing there could be no doubt. He was in earnest, and he strove to infuse his earnestness into the age. In another part of this volume, discoursing of Wilson, we have said that his wondrous powers were neutralised through his want of concentrated purpose; but certainly this cannot be charged against Irving. His objects during his life seem to have been two. Carlyle says, "This man strove to be a Christian priest." This was his first but not his only purpose. He strove, secondly, to be a Christian prophet. Believing that the end of our present cycle of Christianity was at hand, and that God was about to introduce a new and most mighty dispensation, he felt impelled to proclaim that old things were passed away, and that all things were becoming new. This he did with all the energy of his nature. He smote with his hand—he stamped with his foot—he wept—he cried aloud and spared not—he rose early and sat late—he exhausted his entire energies, and gained an early grave in the proclamation of his message. The mantle of the Baptist seemed to have descended on him, and his sermons

ceased to be compositions, and became cries—the cries of fierce protest, stern injunction, and fire-eyed haste:—"Repent ye! Repent ye! The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." How far his impressions on this subject were correct, is a question on which we enter not now. But surely if Carlyle—the godless prophet of his period, the cursing Balaam of his day—demand and deserve credit for the half-insane sincerity with which he recites his lesson of despair, Irving must be much more admired for his earnestness, as, like the wild eyed prophet who ran round doomed Jerusalem, crying out, "Wo, wo," till he sank down in death, he spent his last breath in crying "Wo, wo, wo, to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpets which are soon to sound, and the vials of vengeance which are soon to be outpoured."

Vain perhaps the inquiry, had he lived, what would have been his career? Many may be disposed to say "Bedlam." We think not. Irving had, indeed, his deep hallucinations, and died under them; but he was a man still in his prime, his mind retained much of its original vigor; these hallucinations were only mists, which had strangled his sun at noon, and would have passed away, and left the orb brighter, and shining with a tenderer light than before. Others may say "Popery." We trow not. He had too much Scotch sagacity, whatever some of his followers may have, ever to become the bond-slave of its degrading and mind-murdering superstitions. Carlyle, we know, supposes that at the time of his death Irving was ripe for that transfigured negation, that golden No, which he calls his creed. Here, too, we demur. That Irving admired and loved *Carlyle*, is notorious, but that a nature so enthusiastic, affectionate, sanguine, trustful, and holy, could ever have been satisfied with *Carlyleism*, is to us inconceivable. Had he even, like Samson, been seduced under cloud of night into that city No, when his senses returned in the morning, he would have arisen in wrath, shaken himself as at other times, and carried away its gates with him in his retreat. A man like Irving would, we verily believe, rather have died trailing the car of Juggernaut, than have lived trusting to the tender mercies of a system which stereotypes despair, and in banishing God out of the universe, reduces man to a hopeless puzzle, and life to a miserable dream.

We venture to say, that had Irving's life been spared he would have forsaken his wilder nostrums, rid himself of the silly people around him, and calmed and sobered down into one of the noblest specimens of enlightened, sanctified, humble, Christ-like humanity which our age or any other has seen. He had the elements of all this within him. His heart was as warm as his genius was powerful. If in his pulpit efforts he sometimes seemed touching upon the angel, in private life, and in the undress of his mind, he "became as a little child." A thousand stories are extant of his generosity—his liberality—his forbearance—his simplicity, as well as of his piety and zeal. But it seemed good to Eternal Providence that his career should be as short as it was chequered, brilliant, and strange. And what, although he founded no sect deserving the name, wrought no deliverance on the earth, reared no pile of literary or of theological handiwork—what, although he died sick of his associates, of his position, and of some of his cherished doctrines, and was emphatically "at sea"—he had lived, on the whole, a heroic life; his errors themselves had proclaimed the nobility of his nature; he died a meek and humble disciple of Jesus Christ, and ages may elapse ere the Church shall see his like again. Of many lowly individuals, it can be truly said, as Christ said of the woman, "she hath done what she could;" but of how few men of Irving's powers, accomplishments, and splendid fame, can it be affirmed that duty was ever dearer to him than delight—that his purpose ever towered more loftily before him than his personal desires—that he loved God better than himself—that emphatically "he did what he could?" And the time has come when even those who most deeply differed from him in opinion, and do still in many things differ, may unite with his ardent worshippers in proclaiming him a man of whom the world was not worthy.

*Note.*—We have called Irving a comet; but, unlike a comet, his tail has not been his brightest or largest portion. With a few exceptions, the present race of Irvingites are, we fear, as feeble, conceited, and superstitious a set of religionists as exists. Even their love and charity, which they parade so much, are diseased—too "sweet to be wholesome." Edward Irving would not *now* march through Coventry with such semi-papistic—semi-Swedenborgian hybrids. They shelter under his name; but were his name fully known it would crush them. Alas! how often do monkeys gibber and make mouths and attempt mimicries behind the back of a man.

## NO. II.—ISAAC TAYLOR.

To commence our review of the great author of the "Saturday Evening" and his works, we have selected an appropriate season—a Saturday evening—after a day of constant and hard intellectual work—with the mists of autumn hanging in divine festoons over the sky, and concealing the stars which had begun lately to come out from their grave of summer sunshine, and to shine like the risen and glorified dead in the serene heaven—and with the prospects of the day sacred to the memory of the resurrection of Jesus casting their gentle shadow forward over our souls. Thus, ere soothing ourselves to calm and rest as we do every Saturday evening, by perusing some of the glorious words of Bunyan, the dreamer of Elstowe, let us first begin our tribute to the dreamer, scarcely less imaginative, of Stamford Rivers.

Taylor never, so far as we know, mounted a pulpit or preached a sermon. But a Christian priest, alike by lineage and by nature, and by training, he unquestionably is. He is one of the few of his surpassing order of intellect who in the present day *are* Christians, whatever they may *avow* themselves to be. He is not only a Christian, but a Christian of the most decided kind, and has gathered up the despised names of "saint," "fanatic," &c., and bound them as a crown unto him. In search of an ideal of Christianity, he has looked at and bowed aside most of our modern forms of it—tarried reverently near the Reformation for a season, and then passed on his way—gone shuddering, but keenly observant, through the midst of the mediæval ages—paused almost patronisingly over the Patristic period—and at last fixed his thought at that singular point where the Primitive *began* to merge into the Patristic, where the Christ seemed to sink back into the Moses, and *there* raised his Eureka, and set up his pillar. We wish that he had gone back a little farther, and striven to reproduce and revive the naked substance of Christianity, as it was left by Jesus of Nazareth himself; but still we feel profoundly grateful for the elaborate and argumentative statements he has given in proof of the vitality which



continued to breathe in Christianity till the anti-Christian leaven had fairly begun to work; and no less for the exhibition he has presented us of the causes of the Church's decline.

Taylor, while a Briton by birth, is in soul and essence an Orientalist. His sympathies, his genius, his scholarship, his temperament, his peculiar kind of piety, all link him to Palestine, and the lands still nearer the sun, where man was first let down from heaven—where he spent his brief Paradisal period—where he fell—and whence the original currents of the race flowed westward, diverging and deepening as they flowed. Like the window of the prophet Daniel, Taylor has his imagination and heart always "standing open towards Jerusalem." Like Christian in the "Pilgrim," he sleeps in a chamber looking toward the east. His imagery and language are oriental—"barbaric pearl and gold." We know not if he ever traveled to the lands of his dreams; but certain we are, that no man of this century would derive more solemn pleasure from such a journey. We love to fancy him sailing on the Lake of Galilee, and conjecturing which of the sunburnt mountains around was that to which the Saviour went up to pray, "himself alone;" or pacing, in profound awe and silence, the beach of that sea which was once Sodom; or sitting by Jacob's well; or looking down from the top of Tabor on the gorge of Endor, and the beautiful plain of Jexreel; or prostrate in prayer under the trees of Gethsemane; or walking out pensive and alone, towards Emmaus; or looking from some giant peak in Lebanon eastward, and northward, and southward, and westward; or marking the windings of the infant Jordan; or mounting a hill of Moab in search of Pisgah; or bathing in "Abana and Pharpar, lucid streams;" or climbing the savage Sinai, by the very path up which Moses trembled, and looking abroad from its summit upon peaks, and crags, and valleys, and deserts, bare as a lunar landscape, and which the ire of Heaven seems to have crossed over in a scorching whirlwind, and made for ever desolate! Few books of travels to Palestine have in them much poetry. M'Cheyne, for instance, passes through all these haunted spots, and seems, and is, deeply affected by their memories; but, being utterly destitute of genuine imagination, he fails in making us realize the solemn scenery of the promised land—his enthusiasm is

entirely pious, instead of being a compound of the pious and the poetical, as Taylor's would be. Lamartine and Chateaubriand go to the other extreme, and become nauseously sentimental. Warburton (in the "Crescent and Cross") and Disraeli (in "Tancred") come nearer to our ideal. But we wait for the avatar of the true traveler and reporter of his travels through that wondrous land, where God did desire to dwell—where he took on him flesh, and looked at his own creation through human eyes—and where he shall, we believe, dwell again, at that prophetic period, when once more to Jerusalem shall the tribes go up, and when the "Holy City," inhabited by the "Holy One of Israel," shall become the praise and the joy, the centre and the glory, not of the earth only, but of the universe!

To the poetic enthusiasm and piety of the East, Taylor has annexed much of the acute intellect, balancing logic, and varied culture of the West. Yet, we confess, we like him always best when he is following the original bent of his mind. We care very little for his opinions on such men as Chalmers and Foster. His idiosyncrasy is so different, that he does not understand, although he loves them both; nor, perhaps, did either of them fully comprehend him. Hence, in his articles on them in the "North British Review," he talks very laboriously, very eloquently, and, to appearance, very profoundly about them, as if he were a kindred spirit. Whereas, in fact, Chalmers was a resuscitated apostle of the first century. Foster was, in all but superstition, a monk of the tenth. Taylor is a Platonic Christian of the second, or Justin Mátyr age. Chalmers was the genius of activity, seeking to make things better; Foster was stiffened into an attitude of solitary protest and stationary wonder at the evils which are in the world; while Taylor calmly and dispassionately, yet with enthusiastic hope, contemplates its good and its evil as a whole. Often, indeed, he leaves this quiet collateral attitude, and rushes down into the field of action or controversy; but it is awkwardly—and his efforts, like those of elephants in the battles of yore, are sometimes less destructive to foes than to friends. His logic is often clumsy; his satire, sarcasm, and invective, are heavy; his controversial weapon is as blunt as it is ponderous; his style is often cumbered and involved;

but in that mood of mind partly poetic, partly philosophic, partly devout, in which the Essenes and ancient mystics indulged, he stands among the authors of this age *facile princeps*. He can reason; but he is better and truer to himself when he broods, with half-shut dreamy eye, as did his spiritual fathers under the divine evenings of the East, when the moon was rising over the mountains of Moab, or as the stars were leaning upon Sinai, now silent in his age, and wrapt as in eternal wonder, at the memory of the more awful burden of wrath and glory which once rested for forty days and forty nights upon his quaking summit.

Taylor is often speculating about the characteristics and tendencies of the present age. These speculations are always ingenious, always eloquently expressed, sometimes just and profound. But, more frequently, a certain vague and dim unreality seems to swathe them, and you are tempted to apply to them the expression, less truly applied to the thought of Coleridge, "philosophic moonshine." He cannot deal clearly or cogently with the present; his congenial fields are the past and the future. His soul loves to penetrate the silent seas of the past, and to seek to resuscitate the mighty primeval forms which once peopled them. He talks to Moses and Isaiah, to Peter, and John, and Paul, to Justin Martyr, to Origen, to Augustine, and to Chrysostom, as to brethren and neighbors. If you can hardly say of him, with Spenser—

"The wars he well remember'd of King Nine,  
Of old Assaracus, and Inachus divine,"

yet his memory, his fancy, and his heart have gone back a great way, and have collected very rich resurrection spoils. Nor is he less trustworthy, or delightful in his views of the future. He is a Millennialian. We do not mean that he is as certain as was Edward Irving, or as hopeful as we are, of the *Pre-millennial Advent*; although various passages in his writings would indicate that he inclines to that ancient hope of the Church. But he is a profound believer in the fact that a long bright evening is to succeed this dark and stormy day, and that Christianity is to gain its final triumph through supernatural aid and intervention. On this hope he speaks;

and beautiful are many of his excursions into that Promised Land, which lies beyond the red Jordan of the "Last Conflict of Great Principles." Our wonder is, that, with these views, Taylor is so sanguine in his expectation of good from some of the methods of spreading or defending Christianity which at present prevail. He believes that we are to have help from on high; and yet he seems hardly to believe that we absolutely *need* it, and that all our present schemes and buttresses can only break the wave of assault, but cannot increase much farther the aggressive power of our faith.

We shall never forget our first perusal of the "Natural History of Enthusiasm." It was in golden summer-tide, in the fair city of Perth, with the Tay adding its fine murmured symphony, and with the blood of eighteen beating almost audibly in our veins, as we read aloud some of its more glowing passages. We remember no *prose* work, with the exception of Chalmers's "Astronomical Discourses," and Hazlitt's "Lectures on English Poetry," by which we were ever so much electrified. We did not then perceive, or at least feel, its faults—the *splendida vitia* of its style, or the hasty generalizations of much of its thinking; but the compound it presented of philosophic tone, poetic genius, and pious spirit, was to us then as new as it was welcome. We had waded through much metaphysics of the Locke and Hume school as through dusty sand—we had revelled in the poetry of Milton, Byron, Cowper, and Thomson—we had read all the common theological writers—but here we found a species of writing which seemed to include all the elements which were presented separately in the other three classes, and we were tempted to cry Eureka! Years and after-reading have somewhat modified our estimate; we would not now compare the "Natural History of Enthusiasm," for suggestiveness, originality, and richness of thought, to such books as Foster's "Essays," which gained more slowly our admiration. The style now seems to us forced and unnatural; but still the treatise must ever have its place and praise as a masterly and powerful analysis of one of the most singular phases of the human mind; perhaps the first upon the same scale ever conducted at once on philosophical and Christian principles.

It added considerably at the time to the interest of this

treatise—first, that the author's name was unknown; and, secondly, that it appeared at—nay, properly speaking, sprang out of—a period when men's minds were much agitated, and when many “expected that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.” Wrapt in soft shadows, another great unknown had come upon the stage. How interesting the two alternatives presented! If it was an old friend, what a universal genius to be able to present a face so new! If a new author, and especially a young one, what a Christian Colossus he must be! And then the tone he assumed was very peculiar and exciting—from its decision, its moderation, its avoidance of extremes, and its oracular depth and dignity. He seemed the very man for the hour! He commenced with recognising distinctly the existence and the uses of genuine enthusiasm; nor did he deny the fact that there were prospects in the future of Christianity which might justify unbounded ardor of expectation; but, having premised this, he proceeded to grasp the reins of the rushing chariot, to curb the fiery steeds, to guard them by the bounds of Scripture, and to guide them on to the goal of common sense. You saw evidences in the book that the author was one in whose veins the tide of enthusiasm had originally boiled very strongly; but who had, by culture, by stern investigation, and by habitual submission to the Word of God, modified and tamed it; so that, while no critic could call him cold, none could accuse him of undue warmth. The book consequently became very popular—was strongly commended by Dr. Chalmers from his chair—was widely circulated and closely imitated by a large class of aspiring youths. Hall alone, with his usual fastidiousness, objected to the style, which, he said, “wearied and fretted his mind,” and with his usual acuteness, saw and pointed out proofs that the author was seeking to disguise himself by a terminology in part affected.

Taylor's second work was his “Saturday Evening.” We shall speak, however, first of his “Fanaticism.” The subject of Fanaticism was less pleasing than that of Enthusiasm, and the execution not so happy. In his first work, his field lay mainly in the first three centuries, when the Christian Faith sat like morning upon the mountains—a dawn already indeed partially overcast, but still a dawn, fresh, strong and beauti-

ful. In his third, he was compelled to pierce the shadow of that deep eclipse which shrouded religion and the middle ages in night, and during which the baleful fires of superstition and fanaticism produced a horrid counterfeit of day. In his first work you saw Stylites on his pillar; the religious hermit in his cave; the enthusiast meditating below the large stars of that sky which had kindled the poetic splendors of a Job. In "Fanaticism" you saw the lonely monk brooding, or agonising, or studying, or sinning in his gloomy cell; the Arabian soldier twanging his bowstring, flourishing his scimitar, and shouting, "No God but Allah, and no prophet but Mahomet;" the stern Crusader, with all the passions of hell in his heart as he stepped from his galley on the shore of Holy Land, and expanded in the sultry atmosphere the standard of the Cross: the sullen inquisitor dreaming of ghastlier dresses for the victims of future auto-da-fés, or of drier dry-pans and slower fires, and deeper dungeons for the enemies of Holy Mother Church; and the savage persecutor lifting up his torch, and with an eye fiercer than it, stepping forward to the pile, and completing the poet's image of the

"Pale martyr in his shirt of fire."

Most powerful were some of Taylor's pictures, and profound not a few of his disquisitions; but, as a whole, the work rather pained and horrified, than satisfied or delighted. It was a faithful daguerreotype of a disgusting subject; and a portion of the disgust was reflected upon the execution, and laid in charge to the artist.

Without dwelling on Taylor's "Physical Theory of Another Life," his "Spiritual Despotism," or his contributions to the Tractarian controversy, we come to his best work, the "Saturday Evening." This is a series of most interesting, and often profound, meditations on such subjects as the stars; the future world; the relation in which our earth stands to the universe; and the future struggles and triumphs of the church. Compared to all the other meditations in the language, those of Taylor are Colossal in their merit. His chapters on the vastness of the material universe are particularly striking. No one has better expressed the unostentatious and silent force with which the "Heavens declare the glory of God, and

the firmament showeth his handiwork." They tell so much, and that so quietly! Silently the sun comes out of his chambers; silently the great moon climbs the September air, and silently she looks down on the silvered sea and the yellow corn; silently, one by one, come forth the host of heaven; silently stretches away that stream of suns—the galaxy; silently, as ghosts of rivers, do its two arms diverge, and wander on; and silently does even the comet, on his fiery wheels, enter the shuddering sky. Were it otherwise, we could not endure their mighty speech. What ear could bear to listen to the thunder of the axle-tree of the sun as he passed us by; or even to that "sphere music" fabled of old to pervade the universe? Were it otherwise, in another sense still—were we to become conversant with the moral laws and conditions of the Great Whole—our state of seclusion would be entirely broken up, and our probation interrupted. But here, too, all is silence. And yet "there is no speech and no language where their voice is not heard." They speak in concert and perfect harmony. Even the comet that has abruptly and without warning swum into this autumn sky is not contradicting, but confirming, the silvery utterance of every smallest planet that shivers out the name "God" to the listening night. They speak constantly—"day unto day uttering speech—night unto night teaching knowledge"—the sun passing on to Sirius, and he to Arcturus, and Arcturus to Ursa Major and his sons, and they to Orion—the great revolving chorus. They speak universally; for where is there a spot so solitary where that star is not seen? and how, at this very hour, are a thousand observatories, and ten thousand times ten thousand eyes, gazing at our fiery stranger as he is telling them in his own mysterious speech concerning his Creator! They speak with divine majesty; and Taylor, to show this in the most striking manner, takes us away to the remoter planets of the system, where the sun is faint and sickly with distance—where the glory of alien firmaments seeks to struggle through the noon; where, at evening, our earth is seen afar off as a dim trembling speck on the verge of the sky; and where, at night, a solid flood of splendor seems to burst from every pore and crevice of the crowded heavens!

Returning to the earth again, our author fails not to give

her her true place in the august system. Little as she relatively is, she has a peculiar importance as a spot selected for the development of certain great moral purposes of the Almighty. *Here* have been announced tidings of vastly greater importance than all these skies ever have uttered, or ever can. These ancient heavens, young too as on creation's day, yet cannot assure us of God's infinity—only of his prodigious superiority to the children of men. All the crowded space we see or can imagine, bears no more proportion to real infinitude than a man's hand does to the marble firmament. *That* surpassing truth must come from the profundities of our own mental and moral nature. The heavens cannot reveal the Father. They show a vague kindness, floating to and fro; but not a special love searching for, to embrace, its children. Of fallen stars they do assure us; but they tell us not that we have fallen from a height higher far than they. Concerning Christ's salvation, too, they are dumb. The "bright and morning star" shines not amid those forests of fire. And on man's immortality they cast not a gleam of light: although for ages they have been shining on his grave. For all this intelligence we must go below, or rather above the stars—to the Bible—"the Book of God—say, rather, God of Books;" and to this star of Bethlehem, Taylor reverently and tenderly conducts us.

Years have elapsed since we read the "Saturday Evening," and yet we believe that in our two last paragraphs we have not misrepresented the author's purport, although the language and imagery are our own. We wish we had time to proceed and analyze some of the other papers, especially those in which he paints the approaching days of earth. The author of the "Coming Struggle" has terribly vulgarized that field of Armageddon. How differently does Taylor, uplifting as he goes "the shout of a king," tread its mist-covered but magnificent plain! Read, to see this, the noble paper entitled, "The Last Conflict of Great Principles," or one or two of the chapters which succeed. We wish, too, that we could follow his daring but holy guidance in amid the celestial ardors, and the heavenly hierarchies, rising (as in David Scott's immortal illustrations of the "Pilgrim's Progress,) tier above tier, circle above circle, gallery above gallery, towards the ineffable blaze



of glory which terminates the view, and in which other systems, and firmaments, and orders of being are dimly discovered, as in a shaded mirror, or seen swimming like motes in the sunbeam. But we forbear, and simply recommend all these contemplations of the most contemplative mind of modern days to our readers. Being "nothing if not critical," we might have dwelt on some of Taylor's faults—on his occasional affectations of manner, turgidities of language, and confusions of imagery. But this is useless, as, in spite of all these, and partly perhaps in consequence of them, he has already obtained a fixed and lofty position among our prose religious writers. We shall merely, ere closing this paper, advise him, in the name of all his genuine admirers, to give up lecturing in public. This is a field which most men of his order are gradually resigning, in weariness or disgust. It is a field, too, for which he is not specially or at all qualified. His manner and delivery are bad—his voice husky, and perpetually interrupted by a cough—his matter, admirable as it seems in the closet, falls flat and dead on a popular audience; and, to crown all, he chose a subject precisely the worst he could have selected for such people as haunted his lecture-rooms, many of whom were the genuine disciples of Theodore Parker and George Dawson. He lectured on the "Poetry of the Bible;" and his enlightened audience cheered him while he was present, and after their usual manner, abused him when he had departed (in, we trust, happy ignorance of their feelings) from amongst them.

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### NO. III.—ROBERT HALL.

ROBERT HALL is a name we, in common with all Christians of this century, of all denominations, deeply venerate and admire. We are not, however, to be classed among his idolaters; and this paper is meant as a calm and comprehensive view of what appear to us, after many needful deductions from the over-estimates of the past, including our own in a former

paper, to be his real characteristics, but in point of merit, of fault, and of simple deficiency.

We labor, like all critics who have never seen their author, under considerable disadvantages. "Knowledge is power." Still more—craving Lord Bacon's pardon—"vision is power." Cæsar said a similar thing when he wrote *Vidi, vici*. To see is to conquer, if you happen to have the faculty of clear, full, conclusive sight. In other cases, the sight of a man whom you misappreciate, and, though you have eyes, cannot see, is a curse to your conception of his character. You look at him through a mist of prejudice, which discolours his visage, and, even when it exaggerates, distorts his stature. Far otherwise with the prepared, yet unprepossessed look of intelligent love. Love hears a voice others cannot hear, and sees a hand others cannot see. In every man of genius, besides what he says, and the direct exhibition he gives of the stores of his mind, there is a certain indescribable something—a preponderance of personal influence—a mesmeric affection—a magical charm. You feel that a great spirit is beside you, even though he be talking mere commonplace, or toying with children. Just as when you are walking through a wood at the foot of a mountain, you do not see the mountain, you see only glimpses of it, but you know it is there; in the find old word, you are "aware" of its presence; and, having once seen (as one who has newly lost his burden continues for a little to imagine it on his shoulders still), you fancy you are still seeing it. This pressure of personal interest and power always dwindles works in the presence of their authors, suggests their possible ideal of performance, and starts the question, What folio or library of folios can enclose *that soul*? The soul itself of the great man often responds to this feeling—takes up all its past doings as a little thing—"paws" like the war-horse in Job after higher achievements—and, like Byron, pants for a lightning-language, a quicker, fierier cypher, "that it may wreak its thought upon expression;" but is forced, like him, to exclaim—

"But, as it is, I live and die unheard,  
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword."

Those who met and conversed with Robert Hall seem all to have felt this singular personal charm—this stream of “virtue going out of him”—this necessary preponderance over his company. Nor was this entirely the effect of the pomp and loftiness of his manner and bearing, although both were loftier than perhaps becomed his Christian character. We have known, indeed, men of mediocre, and less than mediocre talents, exerting an uneasy and crushing influence over far superior persons, through the sheer power of a certain stiff and silent pomp, added to an imposing personal appearance. We know, too, some men of real genius, whose overbearing haughtiness and determination to take the lead in conversation render them exceedingly disagreeable to many, disgusting to some, and yet command attention, if not terror, from all. But Robert Hall belonged to neither of these classes. He might rather be ranked with those odd characters, whose mingled genius and eccentricity compel men to listen to them, and whose pomp, and pride, and overbearing temper, and extravagant bursts, are pardoned, as *theirs*, and because they are counterbalanced by the qualities of their better nature.

We have met with some of those who have seen and heard him talk and preach, and their accounts have coincided in this—that he was more powerful in the parlor than in the pulpit. He was more at ease in the former. He had his pipe in his mouth, his tea-pot beside him, eager ears listening to catch his every whisper—bright eyes raining influence on him; and, under these varied excitements, he was sure to shine. His spirits rose, his wit flashed, his keen and pointed sentences thickened, and his auditors began to imagine him a Baptist Burke, or a Johnson Redivivus, and to wish that Boswell were to undergo a resurrection too. In these evening parties he appeared, we suspect, to greater advantage than in the mornings, when ministers from all quarters called to see the lion of Leicester, and tried to tempt him to roar by such questions as, “Whether do you think, Mr. Hall, Cicero or Demosthenes the greater orator? Was Burke the author of ‘Junius’? Whether is Bentham or Wilberforce the leading spirit of the age?” &c., &c. How Hall kept his gravity or his temper, under such a fire of queries, not to speak of the smoke of the half putrid incense amid which it came forth, we

cannot tell. He was, however, although a vehement and irritable, a very polite man; and, like Dr. Johnson, he "loved to fold his legs, and have his talk out." Many of his visitors, too, were really distinguished men, and were sure, when they returned home, to circulate his repartees, and spread abroad his fame. Hence, even in the forenoons, he sometimes said brilliant things, many of which have been diligently collected by the late excellent Dr. Balmer and others, and are to be found in his memoirs.

Judging by these specimens, our impression of his conversational powers is distinct and decided. His talk was always rapid, ready, clear, and pointed—often brilliant, not unfrequently wild and daring. He said more good and memorable things in the course of an evening than perhaps any talker of his day. To the power of his talk it contributed that his state of body required constant stimulus. Owing to a pain in his spine, he was obliged to swallow daily great quantities of ether and laudanum, not to speak of his favorite potion, tea. This had the effect of keeping him strung up always to the highest pitch; and, while never intoxicated, he was everlastingly excited. Had he been a feeblener man in body and mind, the regimen would have totally unnerved him. As it was, it added greatly to the natural brilliance of his conversational powers, although sometimes it appears to have irritated his temper, and to have provoked ebullitions of passion and hasty, unguarded statement. It was in such moods that he used to abuse Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Pollok, and Edward Irving. He often, too, talked for effect; and his judgments were sometimes exceedingly capricious and self-contradictory. Society was essential to him. It relieved that "permanent shade of gloom" which the acute eye of Foster saw lying on his soul. He rushed to it as into his native air; and, once there, he sometimes talked for victory and display, and often on subjects with which he was very imperfectly acquainted. We cannot wonder that, when he met on one occasion with Coleridge, they did not take to each other. Both had been accustomed to lead in conversation; and, like two suns in one sky, they began to "fight in their courses," and made the atmosphere too hot to hold them. Coleridge, although not so ready, rapid, and sharp, was far profounder, wider, and more

suggestive in his conversation. Hall's talk, like his style, consisted of rather short, pointed, and balanced periods.—Coleridge talked, as he wrote, in long, linked, melodious, and flowing, but somewhat rambling and obscure paragraphs. The one talked; the other lectured. The one was a lively, sparkling stream; the other a great, slow, broad, and lipful river.

A gentleman in Bradford described to us a day he once spent there with Hall. It was a day of much enjoyment and excitement. At the close of it Hall felt exceedingly exhausted; and, ere retiring to rest, asked the landlady for a wine-glass half-full of brandy. "Now," he says, "I am about to take as much laudanum as would kill all this company; for if I don't, I won't sleep one moment." He filled the glass with strong laudanum; went to bed; enjoyed a refreshing rest; and came down to breakfast the next morning "the most majestic-looking man" our informant ever saw; his brow calm and grand; his eye bright; his air serene; and his step and port like those of a superior being, condescending to touch this gross planet. He described his conversation as worthy of his presence—the richest and most sparkling essence he ever imbibed withal. Yet his face was far from being a handsome one. Indeed, it reminded some people of an *exaggerated frog's*. But the amplitude of his forehead, the brilliance of his eye, and the strength and breadth of his chest, marked him out always from the roll of common men, and added greatly to the momentum both of his conversation and his preaching.

His preaching has been frequently described, but generally by those who heard him in the decline of his powers. It came to a climax in Cambridge, and was never so powerful after his derangement. To have heard him in Cambridge, must have been a treat almost unrivalled in the history of pulpit-oratory. In the prime of youth and youthful strength, "hope still rising before him, like a fiery column, the *dark side not yet turned*," his fancy exuberant; his language less select, perhaps, but more energetic and abundant than in later days; full of faith without fanaticism, and of ardor without excess of enthusiasm; with an eye like a coal of fire; a figure, strong, erect, and not yet encumbered with corpulence; a voice not loud, but sweet, and which ever and anon "trem-

bled" below his glorious sentences and images, and an utterance rapid as a mountain torrent—did this young apostle stand up, and, to an audience as refined and intellectual as could then be assembled in England, "preach Christ and him crucified." Sentence followed sentence, each more brilliant than its forerunner, like Venus succeeding Jupiter in the sky, and Luna drowning Venus; shiver after shiver of delight followed each other through the souls of the hearers, till they wondered "whereunto this thing should grow," and whether they were in the body or out of the body they could hardly tell. To use the fine words of John Scott, "he unveiled the mighty foundations of the Rock of Ages, and made their hearts vibrate with a strange joy, which they shall recognize in loftier stages of their existence." What a pity that, with the exception of his sermon on Modern Infidelity, all these Cambridge discourses have irrecoverably perished.

This, however, like Chalmers's similar splendid career in the Tron Church, Glasgow, could not last for ever. Hall became over-excited, perhaps over-elated, and his majestic mind departed from men for a season. When he "came back to us," much of his power and eloquence was gone. His joy of being, too, was lessened. He became a sadder and a wiser man. He no longer rushed exulting to the pulpit, as the horse to the battle. He "spake trembling in Israel." He had, in his derangement, got a glimpse of the dark mysteries of existence, and was humbled in the dust under the recollection of it. He had met, too, with some bitter disappointments. His love to a most accomplished and beautiful woman was not returned. Fierce spasms of agony ran ever and anon through his body. The terrible disease of madness continued to hang over him all his life long, like the sword of Damocles, by a single hair. All this contributed to soften and also somewhat to weaken his spirit. His preaching became the mild sunset of what it had been. The power, richness, and fervor of his ancient style were for ever gone.

We have heard his later mode of preaching often described by eye-witnesses. He began in a low tone of voice; as he proceeded his voice rose and his rapidity increased; the two first thirds of his sermon consisted of statement or argument; when he neared the close, he commenced a strain of appeal.

and then, and not till then, was there any eloquence; then his stature erected itself, his voice swelled to its utmost compass, his rapidity became prodigious, and his practical questions—poured out in thick succession—seemed to sound the very souls of his audience. Next to the impressiveness of the conclusion, what struck a stranger most was the exquisite beauty and balance of his sentences; every one of which seemed quite worthy of, and ready for, the press. Sometimes, indeed, he was the tamest and most commonplace of preachers, and men left the church wondering if this were actually the illustrious man.

His Sermons, in their printed form, next demand our consideration. Their merits, we think, have been somewhat exaggerated hitherto, and are likely, in the coming age, to be rated too low. It cannot be fairly maintained that they exhibit a great native original mind like Foster's, or that they are full, as a whole, of rich suggestive thought. The thinking in them is never mere commonplace; but it never rises into rare and creative originality. In general, he aims only at the elegant and the beautiful, and is seldom sublime. He is not the Moses, or the Milton, or the Young—only the Pope, of preachers. Like Pope, his forte is refined sense, expressed in exquisite language. In conversation, he often ventured on daring flights, but seldom in his writings. While reading them, so cool is the strain of thought—so measured the writing—so perfect the self-command—so harmoniously do the various faculties of the writer work together—that you are tempted to ask, How could the author of this ever have been mad?

We are far from wishing, by such remarks, to derogate from the merit of these remarkable compositions. For, if not crowded with thought or copious in imagination, and if somewhat stiff, stately, and monotonous in style, they are at once very masculine in thinking, and very elegant in language. If he seldom reaches the sublime, he never condescends to the pretty, or even the neat. He is always graceful, if not often grand. A certain sober dignity distinguishes all his march, and now and then he trembles into touches of pathos or elevated sentiment, which are as felicitous as they are delicate. Some of the fragments he has left behind him discover, we

think, more of the strong, bold conception, and the *vis vivida* of genius, than his more polished and elaborate productions. Such are his two Sermons on the Divine Concealment. But in all his works you see a mind which had ventured too far and had overstrained its energies in early manhood, and which had come back to cower timidly in its native nest.

It were wasting time to dwell on sermons so well-known as those of Hall. We prefer that on the death of Dr. Ryland, as more characteristic of his distinguishing qualities of dignified sentiment, graceful pathos, and calm, majestic eloquence. In his "Infidelity," and "War," and the "Present Crisis," he grapples with subjects unsuited, on the whole, to his genius, and becomes almost necessarily an imitator, particularly of Burke—whose mind possessed all those qualities of origination, power over the terrible, and boundless fertility in which Hall's was deficient. But in Ryland you have *himself*; and we fearlessly pronounce that sermon the most classical and beautiful strain of pulpit eloquence in the English language.

Hall as a thinker never had much power over the age, and that seems entirely departed. Even as a writer he is not now so much admired. The age is getting tired of measured periods, and is preferring a more conversational and varied style. He has founded no school, and left few stings in the hearts of his hearers. Few have *learned* much from him. Yet as specimens of pure English, expressing evangelical truth in musical cadence, his sermons and essays have their own place, and it is a high one, among the classical writings of the age.

Hall, as we have intimated, had a lofty mein, and was thought by many, particularly in a first interview, rather arrogant and overbearing. But this was only the hard outside shell of his manner; beneath there were profound humility, warm affections, and childlike piety. He said that he "enjoyed everything." But this capacity of keen enjoyment was, as often in other cases, linked to a sensitiveness and morbid acuteness of feeling, which made him at times very melancholy. He was, like all thinkers, greatly perplexed by the mysteries of existence, and grieved at the spectacles of sin and misery in this dark valley of tears. He was like an angel, who had lost his way from heaven, and his wings with it, and who was looking perpetually upwards with a sigh, and longing to re-



turn We heard, some time ago, one striking story about him. He had been seized with that dire calamity, which had once before laid him aside from public duty, and had been quietly removed to a country-house. By some accident his door had been left unlocked, and Hall rushed out from bed into the open air. It was winter, and there was thick snow on the ground. He stumbled amid the snow—and the sudden shock on his half-naked body restored him to consciousness. He knelt down in the snow, and, looking up to heaven, exclaimed, "Lord, what is man?" To the constant fear of this malady, and to deep and melancholy thoughts on man and man's destiny, was added what Foster calls an "apparatus of torture" within him—a sharp calculus in his spine—a thorn in the flesh, or rather in the *bone*. Yet against all this he manfully struggled, and his death at last might be called a victory. It took him away from the perplexities of this dim dawn of being, where the very light is as darkness—from almost perpetual pain, and from the shadow of the grimmest Fear that can hang over humanity—and removed him to those regions mild, of calm and serene air, of which he loved to discourse, where no cloud stains the eternal azure of the holy soul—where doubt is as impossible as disbelief or darkness—and where God in all the grandeur of his immensity, but in all the softness of his love, is for ever unveiled. There his friends Foster and Chalmers have since joined him; and it is impossible not to form delightful conjectures as to their meeting each other, and holding sweet and solemn fellowship in that blessed region. "Shall we know each other in heaven?" is a question often asked. And yet why should it be doubted for a moment? Do the brutes know each other on earth, and shall not the saints in heaven? Yes! that notion of a reunion which inspired the soul of Cicero, which made poor Burns exult in the prospect of his meeting with his dear lost Highland Mary, and which Hall, in the close of his sermon on Ryland, has covered with the mild glory of his immortal eloquence, is no dream or delusion. It is one of the "true sayings of God," and there is none more cheering to the soul of the struggler here below. These three master spirits have met, and what a meeting it has been! The spirit of Foster has lost that sable garment which suspicious conjecture, pry-

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ing curiosity, and gloomy temperament had woven for it here, and his "raiment doth shine as the light." Chalmers has recovered from the wear and tear of that long battle, and life of tempestuous action which was his lot on earth. And Hall's thorn rankles no longer in his side, and all his fears and forebodings have passed away. The long day of eternity is before them all, and words fail us, as we think of the joy with which they anticipate its unbounded pleasures, and prepare for its unwearying occupations. They are above the clouds that encompassed them once, and they hear the thunders that once terrified or scathed them, muttering harmlessly far, far below. Wondrous their insight, deep their joy, sweet their reminiscences, ravishing their prospects. But their hearts are even humbler than when they were on earth; they never weary of saying, "Not unto us, not unto us;" and the song never dies away on their lips, any more than on those of the meanest and humblest of the saved, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and honor, dominion and power, for ever and ever. Amen."

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#### NO. V.—DR. CHALMERS.

THERE are some subjects which seem absolutely inexhaustible. They may be compared to the alphabet, which, after 5000 years, is capable still of new and infinite combinations—or to the sun, whose light is as fresh to-day as it was a million of ages ago—or to space, which has opened her hospitable bosom to myriads of worlds, and has ample room for myriads on myriads more. Such a fresh ever-welling theme is Chalmers, and will remain so for centuries to come; and we make no apology at all for bidding his mighty shade sit once more for its portrait, from no prejudiced or unloving hand. And here we propose first to give our own reminiscences of him; then to speak of the characteristics of his genius, eloquence, and purpose; and, in fine, to examine at some length his most popular work, his "Astronomical Discourses."

We first heard Dr. Chalmers preach on Sabbath, the 9th of October, 1831, when introducing the Rev. Mr. Martin, of St. George's, Edinburgh, to his flock. Through the kindness of a friend who sat in the church, we obtained, although with difficulty, a seat in the very front of the gallery, near a pew in which, on Sabbath, the 8th of February, 1846, we enjoyed a comfortable nap under a sermon from the Rev. Dr. Brunton! There was no napping THAT forenoon. We went, we remember, with excited but uncertain expectations. We had read Chalmers's "Astronomical Discourses," and had learned to admire them, but had no clear or decided view of their author, and were not without certain Dissenting prejudices against him. Being near-sighted, and the morning being rather dim, we could not catch a distinct glimpse of his features. We saw only a dark large mass of man bustling up the pulpit stairs, as if in some dread and desperate haste. We heard next a hoarse voice, first giving out the psalm in a tone of rapid familiar energy, and after it was sung, and prayer was over, announcing for text, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still (*stull*, he pronounced it), he that is filthy (*fulthy*, he called it), let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy *stull*." And then, like an eagle leaving the mountain cliff, he launched out at once upon his subject, and soared on without any diminution of energy or flutter of wing for an hour and more. The discourse is published, and most of our readers have probably read it. It had two or three magnificent passages, which made the audience for a season one soul. A burst especially we remember, in reference to the materialism of heaven—"There may be palms of triumph, I do not know—there may be floods of melody," and then he proceeded to show that heaven was more a state than a place. On the whole, however, we were disappointed, as indeed we were, at the first blush, with all the Edinburgh notabilities. Strange as it may seem, neither Wilson, nor Chalmers, nor Professor Leslie, nor Dr. Gordon, nor Jeffrey, produced, AT FIRST, on us a tithe of the impression which many country ministers, whose names are extant only in the Lamb's Book of Life, had easily and ineffaceably left. We learned, indeed, afterwards to admire Wilson and Chalmers to the very depths of our hearts; and

John Bruce, whom at first, too, we rather disrelished, became ultimately an idol. But, on the whole, our first feeling, in reference to the Edinburgh celebrities, lay and cleric, was that of intense disappointment.

This feeling would be forgiven by the men themselves, or even by the warmest of their admirers, if they could have seen us, a year or two afterwards, listening to Wilson on the immortality of the soul, to John Bruce on the text, "The sting of death is sin," or to Thomas Chalmers repeating, at the opening of the General Assembly of 1833, the sermon on "He that is *fulthy* let him be *fulthy* still." That morning opened in all the splendor of May—and the Assembly which met knew that the Reform Bill had passed since its last session, and that it must become perforce a reforming Assembly too. Chalmers rose to the greatness of the occasion. After delivering, with greatly increased energy, all the original discourse, he added a new peroration of prodigious power, drawing the attention of his "Fathers and Brethren" to the circumstances in which they were placed, and to the duties to which they were called. It told like a thunderbolt. Even the gallery, which was half empty, was absolutely electrified; and the divinity students and young ladies who had been perseveringly ogling each other there, were compelled to turn their eyes and hearts away towards the glowing countenance and heaving form of the "old man eloquent."

We occasionally heard him, too, in his class-room, always with great interest and often with vivid delight. Our tone of enthusiasm, however, was somewhat restrained, from our frequent intercourse with his students, who in general over-rated him, and were sometimes disposed to cry out, "It is the voice of a god, not of a man," and whose imitations of his style and manner were frequent, and grotesquely unsuccessful. We never but once heard him there rise to his highest pitch. It was at the close of a lecture illustrating the character and claims of Christianity; when, grasping, as it were, all around him (like an assaulted man for a sword), in search of a yet stronger proof of his point, he lifted up his own "Astronomical Discourses," and read (with a brow flushing like a crystal goblet newly filled with wine—an eye glaring with sudden excitement—a voice "pealing harsh thunder"—and a motion

as if some shirt of Nessus had just fallen upon his shoulders—amid dead silence) the following passage:—

“Let the priests of another faith ply their prudential expedients, and look so wise and so wary in the execution of them; but Christianity stands in a higher and firmer attitude. The defensive armor of a shrinking or timid policy does not suit her. Hers is the naked majesty of truth; and with all the grandeur of age, but with none of its infirmities, has she come down to us, and gathered new strength from the battles she has won in the many controversies of many generations. With such a religion as this there is nothing to hide. All should be above-boards; and the broadest light of day should be made fully and freely to circulate through all her secretcies. But secrets she has none. To her belong the frankness and simplicity of conscious greatness.”

This is eloquent writing; but where the fiery edge of Bardic power which seemed to surround it as he spoke? That is gone; and the number must fast lessen of those who now can remember those strange accompaniments of Chalmers's eloquence—the uplifted, half-extracted eye—the large flushed forehead—the pallor of the cheek contrasting with it—the eager lips—the mortal passion struggling within the heaving breast—the furious motions of the short, fin-like arms, and the tones of the voice, which seemed sometimes to be grinding their way down into your ear and soul.

We heard Chalmers once, and only once, again. It was in Dundee, in the spring of 1839. The audience was crowded, although it was a week-day, and only afternoon. The object of the discourse was to defend church extension. For an hour or so the lecturer was chiefly employed in statistical details. He lifted up, and read occasional extracts from certain dingy, and as he called them, “delightful ill-spelled letters,” from working men in support of the object. Toward the end he became more animated, and closed a brilliant burst of ten minutes' duration by quoting the lines of Burns:—

“From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs;  
These make her loved at home, revered abroad.  
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings;  
An honest man's the noblest work of God.”

The effect was overwhelming. We happened, in leaving the church, to pass near the orator, and were greatly struck with the rapt look of his face—

“The wind was down, but still the sea ran high.”

A certain pallid gleam had succeeded the flushed ardor of his appearance in the pulpit. It was the last time we were ever to gaze on the strange, coarse, but most powerful and meaning countenance of Dr. Chalmers.

And yet when, years later, we saw Duncan's picture of him, he seemed still alive before us. The leonine massiveness of the head, body, and brow—the majestic repose of the attitude—the eye withdrawn upwards into a deep happy dream—the air of simple homely grandeur about the whole person and bearing—were all those of Chalmers, and combined to prove him next, perhaps, to Wilson, the Genius of Scotland—the hirsute Forest-God of a rugged but true-hearted land.

It was this air of unshorn power which marked him out from all his ecclesiastical contemporaries, and contributed in some measure to his popularity. Scotland—“the land of mountain and of flood”—loves that her idols shall be large and shaggy. Think of her worship of the rough John Knox—of the stalwart sons of the Covenant—of Burns and Wilson, the two tameless spirits!—and of her own homely, all-reflecting, and simple Sir Walter Scott. What cares she, in comparison with these, for her polished Robertsons and Jeffreys?

It is well remarked by Jeffreys, in vindicating the Scottish language from the charge of vulgarity, that it is not the language of a province, like Yorkshire, but of an ancient and independent kingdom. So Chalmers's peculiarities and roughness of speech were those of the ancient “kingdom of Fife,” and in his “whuchies,” and his “fulthies,” and his bad quantities, after the first blush there was found a strange antique charm—they were of the earth, earthy, and suited the stout aboriginal character of the man. His roughness was but the rough grating of the wheels of the huge and wealthy wain, as it moved homewards over a rocky road, amid the autumn twilight, and told of rude plenty and of massive power.

The effects of his eloquence have been often described.—Many orators have produced more cheers, and shone more in

brilliant individual points : Chalmers's power lay in pressing on his whole audience before him, through the sheer momentum of genius and enthusiasm. He treated his hearers as constituting "one mind," and was himself "one strength," urging it, like a vast stone, upwards. In this he very seldom failed. He might not always convince the understandings—he often offended the tastes; but, unlike Sisyphus, he pushed his stone to the summit—he secured at least a temporary triumph.

This he gained greatly from the intensity of his views, as well as from the earnestness of his temperament, and the splendor of his genius. He had strong, clear, angular, although often one-sided and mistaken, notions on the subjects he touched; and these, by incessant reiteration, by endless turning round, by dint of dauntless furrowing, he succeeded in *ploughing* into the minds of his hearers. Or it seemed a process of *stamping*; "I must press such and such a truth on them, whether they hear or forbear. I shall stamp on till it is fixed undeniably and for ever upon their minds." Add to this the unconsciousness of himself. He never *seemed*, at least, to be thinking about himself, nor very much of his hearers. He was occupied entirely with those "big bulking" ideas of which he was the mere organ, and he taught his audience to think of *them* principally too. How grand it was to witness a strong and gifted man transfigured into the mere medium of an idea!—his whole body so filled with its light that you seemed to *see it* shining through him, as through a transparent vase!

His imagination was a quality in him of which much nonsense used to be said. It was now made his only faculty, and now it was described as of the Shakspeare or Jeremy Taylor order. In fact, it was not by any means even his highest power. Strong, broad, Baconian logic was his leading faculty; and he had, besides, a boundless command of a certain order of language, as well as all the burning sympathies and energies of the orator. Taking him all in all, he was unquestionably a man of lofty genius; but it very seldom assumed the truly poetic form, and was rather warm than rich. Power of illustration he possessed in plenty; but in *curiosa felicitas*, short, compact, hurrying strokes as of lightning, and that fine sudden imagery in which strong and beautiful thought so na-

turally incarnates itself, he was rather deficient. He was, consequently, one of our least terse and quotable authors.—Few sentences, collecting in themselves the results of long trains of thinking, in a new and sparkling form—like “apples of gold in a network of silver”—are to be found in his writings. Nor do they abound in bare, strong aphorisms. Let those who would see his deficiency in this respect compare him, not with the Jeremy Taylors, Barrows, and Donnes, merely, but with the Burkes, Hazlitts, and Coleridges of a later day, and they will understand our meaning. His writings remind you rather of the sublime diffusiveness of a Paul, than of the deep, solitary, and splendid dicta of the great Preacher-King of ancient Israel.

A classic author he is not, and never can become. From this destiny, his Scotticisms, vulgarities, and new combinations of sounds and words, do not necessarily exclude him; but his merits (as a MERE LITERARY man) do not counterbalance his defects. The power of the works, in fact, was not equal to the power of the man. He always, indeed, threw his heart, but not always his artistic consciousness, into what he wrote. Hence he is generally “rude in speech, although not in knowledge.” His utterance is never confused, but is often hampered, as of one speaking in a foreign tongue. This sometimes adds to the effect of his written composition—it often added amazingly to the force of those extempore harangues he was in the habit of uttering, amid the intervals of his lectures, to his students. Those stammerings, strugglings, repetitions, risings from and sittings down into his chair—often, however, coming to some fiery burst, or culminating in some rapid and victorious climax—reminded you of Wordsworth’s lines:—

“So have I, not unmoved in mind,  
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind,  
Thus beating up against the wind.”

You liked to see this strong-winged bird of the storm matching his might against it—now soaring up to overcome it—now sinking down to undermine it—now screaming aloud in its teeth—now half-choked in the gust of its fury—but always moving onwards, and sometimes riding triumphant on its



changed or subjugated billow! But all this did not (except to those who had witnessed the phenomenon) tend to increase the artistic merit or permanent effect of his works.

No oratory can be printed *entire*. Every speaker, who is not absolutely dull and phlegmatic, says something far more through his tones, or eye, or gestures, than his bare words can tell. But this is more the case with some than with others. About the speaking of Whitfield there was a glare of—shall we say vulgar?—earnestness, which, along with his theatrical, but transcendent elocution, lives only in tradition. It was the same with Kirwan, a far more commonplace man. Struthers, a Relief minister in Edinburgh, at the beginning of this century, seems to have possessed the same incommunicable power, and his sermon on the battle of Trafalgar lives as a miraculous memory on the minds of a few—and nowhere else. The late Dr. Heugh, of Glasgow, possessed a Canning-like head, as well as a certain *copperplate charm* in his address, which have not, as they could not, be transferred to his printed sermons. And so, in perhaps a still larger degree, with Dr. Chalmers; the difference being, that while in the others the manner seemed to fall out from the man, like a gay but becoming garment, in Chalmers it was wrapped convulsively around him, like the mantle of a dying Cæsar. It is but his naked body that we now behold.

Finer still it was, we have been told, to come in suddenly upon the inspired man in his study, when the full heat of his thought had kindled up his being into a flame—when, in concert with the large winter fire blazing beside him, his eye was flaming and speaking to itself—his brow flushing like a cloud in its solitude—his form moving like that of a Pythoness on her stool—and now and then his voice bursting silence, and showing that, as often in the church he seemed to fancy himself in solitude, so, often in solitude, he thought himself thundering in the church. Those who saw him in such moods had come into the forge of the Cyclops; and yet so far was he from being disturbed or angry, he would rise and salute them with perfect politeness, and even kindliness; but they were the politeness and kindliness of one who had been interrupted while forming a two-edged sword for Mars, or carving another figure upon the shield of Achilles.

It is curious, entering in spirit into the *studies* or retirements of great authors, in the past or the present, and watching their various kinds and degrees of excitement while composing their productions. We see a number of interesting figures—Homer, with his sightless eyes, but ears preternaturally open, rhapsodizing to the many-sounding sea his immortal harmonies—Eschylus, so agitated (according to tradition) while framing his terrible dialogues and choruses, that he might have been mistaken for his own Orestes pursued by the Furies—Dante, stern, calm, silent, yet with a fierce glance at times from his hollow eye, and a convulsive movement in his tiger-like lower jaw, telling of the *furor* that was boiling within—Shakspeare, serene even over his tragic, and smiling a gentle smile over his comic, creations—Scott, preserving, alike in depicting the siege of Torquilstone, the humors of Caleb Balderstone, and the end of the family of Ravenswood, the same gruff yet good-natured equanimity of countenance—Byron, now scowling a fierce scowl over his picture of a shipwreck, and now grinning a ghastly smile while dedicating his “Don Juan” to Southey—Shelley, wearing on his fine features a look of perturbation and wonder, as of a cherub only *half* fallen, and not yet at home in his blasphemous attitude of opposition to the Most High—Wordsworth, murmuring a solemn music over the slowly-filling page of “Ruth,” or the “Eclipse in Italy”—Coleridge, nearly asleep, and dreaming over his own gorgeous creations, like a drowsy bee in a heather bloom—Wilson, as Hogg describes him, when they sat down to write verses in neighboring rooms, *howling* out his enthusiasm (and when he came to this pitch, poor Hogg uniformly felt himself vanquished, and threw down his pen!)—or, in fine, Chalmers, as aforesaid, agonizing in the sweat of his great intellectual travail!

We have spoken of Chalmers as possessed of an idea which drowned his personal feelings, and pressed all his powers into one focus. This varied, of course, very much at different stages of his history. It was, at first, that of a purely scientific theism. He believed in God as a dry demonstrated fact, which he neither trembled at nor loved—whose personality he granted, but scarcely seems to have *felt*. From this he passed to a more decided form of belief; worship, and love for the

great I Am, and is said to have spent a portion of his youth in constant and delighted meditation upon God and his works, like one of the ancient Indian or Egyptian mystics. From this pillar he descended, and, as a preacher, tried to form a compromise between science and a certain shallow and stripped form of Christianity. The attempt was sincere, but absurd in idea, and unsuccessful in execution. The *vitality* of Christianity became next his darling argument, and was pled by him with unmitigated urgency for many years. Christianity must be alive, active, aggressive, or was no Christianity at all. This argument began, by and by, in his mind to strike out into various branches. If alive and life-giving, Christianity ought to give life, first of all, to literary and scientific men; secondly, to the commercial classes; thirdly, to the poor; and fourthly, to governments. And we may see this four-headed argument pervading his book on Astronomy, his "Sermons on Commerce," his "Christian and Civic Economy of large Towns," and his innumerable brochures on the questions of Church Extension and of Non-intrusion. Nay, in his penultimate paper in the "North British Review," we find him, almost with his last breath, renewing the cry for "fruit," as the main answer to that tide of German scepticism which none saw more clearly than he coming over the church and the world. That he always pled this great argument of practicalizing Christianity with discretion or success, we are far from asserting; nay, we grant that he committed as many blunders as he gained triumphs. Nor have the results been commensurate. Literary and scientific men have not, alas, listened to the voice of this charmer, but have walked on their own uneasy way, over the "burning marle" of unhappy speculation. The commercial spirit of the times is far enough yet from being thoroughly Christianized; and the golden rule does not yet hang suspended over our warehouses and dock-yards. The poor are, as a mass, sinking every year more and more deeply into the gulfs of infidelity and vice; and the great problem of how the State is to help—if it help at all—the Church, seems as far from solution as in the year 1843 or 1847. Still, Chalmers has not lived in vain. He has left a burning testimony against many of the crying evils of his time, especially against that Selfishness which is poisoning al-

most all ranks alike, and in which, as in one stagnant pool, so many elements, otherwise discordant, are satisfied to "putrify in peace." He has taken up the reproach of the gospel, and bound it as a crown around his brow. From the most powerful pulpit in the land, he preached Christ and him crucified. He has created various benevolent and pious movements, which are likely long to perpetuate his memory. And he has laid his hand upon, and to some degree, although not altogether, shattered those barriers—either absurd in the folly of man, or awful in the providence of God—which have too long separated Christian principle from general progress, the Bible from the people, the pulpit from the press, and made religion little else than "a starry stranger" in an alien land. We accept him as a rude type of better things—as the dim day-star of a new and brighter era.

We linger as we trace over in thought the leading incidents of his well-known story. We see the big-headed, warm-hearted, burly boy, playing upon the beach at Anstruther, and seeming like a gleam of early sunshine upon that coldest of all coasts. We follow him as he strides along with large, hopeful, awkward steps to the gate of St. Andrews. We see him, a second Dominie Sampson, in his tutor's garret at Arbroath, in the midst of a proud and pompous family—himself as proud, though not so pompous, as they. We follow him next to the peaceful manse of Kilmany, standing amid its green woods and hills, in a very nook of the land, whence he emerges, now to St. Andrews to battle with the stolid and slow-moving Professors of that day, now to Dundee to buy materials for chemical research (on one occasion setting himself on fire with some combustible substance, and requiring to run to a farmhouse to get himself put out!), now to the woods and hills around to botanise—ay, even on the Sabbath-day!—and now to Edinburgh to attend the General Assembly, and give earnest of those great oratorical powers which were afterwards to astonish the Church and the world. With solemn awe we stand by his bedside during that long, mysterious illness, which brought him to himself, and taught him that religion was a reality, as profound as sin, sickness, and death. We mark him then, rising up from his couch, like an eagle newly bathed—like a giant refreshed—and commencing that course of evan-

gelical teaching and action only to be terminated in the grave. We pursue him to Glasgow, and see him sitting down in a plain house in Sauchiehall Road, and proceeding to write sermons which are to strike that city like a planet, and make him the real King of the West. We mark him next, somewhat worn and wearied, returning to his *alma mater*, to resume his old games of golf on the Links, his old baths in the Bay, and to give an impetus, which has never yet entirely subsided, to that grass-grown city of Rutherford and Halyburton. Next we see him bursting like a shell this narrow confine, and soaring away to "stately Edinburgh, throned on crags," to become there a principality and power among many, and to give stimulus and inspiration to hosts of young aspirants.

With less pleasure we follow the after-steps of his career—the restless and uneasy agitations in which he engaged, which shook the energies of his constitution, impaired the freshness of his mind, and paved the way for his premature and hasty end. With deep interest, however, we see him sitting at the head of a new and powerful ecclesiastical body, which owed, if not its existence, yet much of its glory, to him; so that the grey head of Chalmers in that Canonmills Hall seemed to outshine the splendors of mitres, and coronets, and crowns. We watch him with still profounder feelings, preaching to the poor outcasts of the West Port, or sitting like a little child beside them, as others are telling them the simple story of the Cross. We follow him on his "last pilgrimage" to the south—confronting senates—going out of his way to visit the widows of Hall and Foster—bursting into the studies of sublime unhappy sceptics, and giving them a word in season—preaching wherever he had opportunity, and returning in haste to die! And our thoughts and feelings rise to a climax, as we hear the midnight cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" raised beside his couch; and, entering in, behold the grand old Christian Giant—the John Knox of the nineteenth century—laid gently on his pillow, asleep, with that sleep which knows no waking, till the trumpet shall sound, and when he surely shall be among the foremost to rise to meet the Master, and to go in with him into the eternal banqueting-room.

What divine of the age, on the whole, can we name with Chalmers? Horsley was, perhaps, an abler man, but where

the moral grandeur? Hall had the moral grandeur, and a far more cultivated mind; Foster had a sterner, loftier, and richer genius; but where, in either, the seraphic ardour, activity, and energy of Christian character possessed by Chalmers? Irving, as an orator, had more artistic skill, and, at the same time, his blood was warm with a more volcanic and poetic fire; but he was only a brilliant fragment, not a whole—he was a meteor to a star—a comet to a sun—a Vesuvius, peaked, blue, crowned with fire, to a domed Mont Blanc, that altar of God's morning and evening sacrifice. Chalmers stood alone; and centuries may elapse ere the Church shall see—and when did she ever more need to see?—another such spirit as he.

We come now, in fine, to examine the argument of the “Astronomical Discourses,” and to make a few closing remarks on Astronomy, expanding, and in some important points modifying, the views propounded in our “First Gallery.”

The “Astronomical Discourses” were a kind of chemico-theologic experiment at the beginning. Chalmers was fond, we know, of turning the air-pump, as well as of pursuing the queerest chemical, or pneumatic, or dietetic whims. Soon after he arrived in Glasgow, and while the city was yet vibrating to the electric shock he gave it on his first entrance, he determined to deepen and prolong the thrill, by snatching an argument for Christianity from the stars. He had often gazed at the gleaming host of Heaven, now with the mathematical purpose of the astronomer, and now with the abandonment and enthusiasm of the poet. Along with stars, doubts and dark questions had shot across his soul, and he set himself, in his “Astronomical Discourses,” in seeking to answer the objections of others, to give and to enshrine the reply to his own.

Sooth to say, the answer was about as shallow as the argument. All attacks on Christianity founded on physics are essentially and *ab origine* worthless. Christianity has nothing whatever to do with physical or metaphysical conjectures about the conformation of the universe; and nothing yet has transpired beyond conjecture on that wondrous theme. Even gravitation is but a big-sounding name for a series of inscrutable affinities between larger and lesser particles of matter; and truly did Newton call himself a boy, gathering, in his resplendent generalisations, only a few bigger and brighter pebbles on

the shore of the unsearchable ocean of truth. Even the pebbles HE gathered may yet be more severely analysed and found perhaps to be air! In metaphysics it is still worse. For there we have not even pebbles; but a shower of conflicting sand-grains tossed up and down upon breaths as vain and varied as the winds of the African wilderness!

Across this wide and burning waste of stones and shifting sands of thought, there came, 2000 years ago, a still small voice—the voice of the Man-God of Galilee, saying, nor saying in vain, “Peace, be still.” He was no physicist—only the waves obeyed his voice. He was no metaphysician—only He “knew what was in man.” He never discoursed on sympathy or patriotism, but His heart bled at the tales and sight of the wretched, the forlorn, and the forgotten. He uttered no dogmatic system either of morality, or politics, or religion, but he spoke as never man spake; He breathed, as it were, on the world, and it revived at the breath; His word was the inspiration, His death the life, and His last blessing the legacy of the world. His faith at once established itself as something entirely different from, and incomparably higher than all earthly systems and theories. It appealed directly to the moral nature. It sought and found an echo in the heart and conscience. There it fixed, and there it still holds its inexpugnable foundations. It is friendly to all true philosophy, and science, and literature; but it regards them as we could conceive an angel regarding an assembly of earthly sages. It is not of their order. It is impassive to all scientific attacks, and hardly requires scientific defence. It dwells apart—a glorious anomaly, even as its founder was. It is a stranger on the earth, and its great purpose is to gather its own out of this ruined world, and to take them away to heaven.

Hence, we repeat, attacks, however able and ingenious, may seem to shake, but cannot overturn it. They have never been able to approach its seat of life or its fortress of power. What, for example, has it to do with the length of time taken up in building this globe, or with the size of the starry firmament? Christ came not to give any information on these subjects, but to announce the “golden rule.” Paul preached not on such topics, but on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. The gospel is a message of mercy to a fallen race, and

bears no other burden with it. It has not been elicited or elaborated from the universe, or the mind of man—it has come into both from a higher region, and it is not amenable to the laws of this cold and cloudy clime. Shake its power over the moral nature, and you destroy its essence; but, as long as this remains, all minor difficulties and objections pass by like the idle wind.

Dr. Chalmers does not seem, at least when writing his "Astronomical Discourses," to have been sufficiently impressed with these views of Christianity. He was, on the contrary, anxious to find for it a scientific basis, and to answer all scientific objections. He found one of these floating about in conversation—it had probably often impressed his own mind—and he must drag it forth and put it to death. This attempt he has made with prodigious energy, but, we humbly think, with indifferent success. He has mangled, it may be, the neck of the victim with his steel, but he has not deprived it even of the little life it had.

The first of these famous sermons is a powerful sketch of the modern astronomy. It blazes like a January Heaven. He mounts up toward his magnificent theme like a strong eagle toward the sun, and his eye never winks, and his wing never for a moment flags. We, who have been so long familiar with the facts of astronomy, have no conception of the freshness and the overwhelming force with which, in Chalmers's style, they fell on a Presbyterian Glasgow audience in the year 1817. Few of the common class of Calvinists in Scotland, at that date, were even Copernicans; down as far as the year 1825 or 1826, we have heard some of them gravely maintaining that there were only "two worlds—that which is, and that which is to come." How amazed must these readers of Boston's "Fourfold State" have been, to hear their most admired divine pouring out his sublime Newtonics from the Tron Church pulpit with such fearlessness and freedom! What had seemed heresy from any other man, seemed from Chalmers revelation. He stood up week after week, and read off to astonished crowds the burning hieroglyphics of the orbs of heaven. The excitement was unparalleled. The novelty of the theme—the daring of some of the individual flights—the apparent force of the argumentation—the almost super-



human excitation of the orator, who seemed to heave, and leap, and swelter, and burn, and groan under the burden of immediate inspiration, carried Glasgow away in a whirlwind. We were then mere children, nor did we hear Chalmers till fourteen years later; but, great as his excitement continued, we were assured by those who had heard him in earlier days, that it was calmness compared to the prophetic fury with which he delivered his "Astronomical Discourses."

Professor Nichol has come after, and in some measure supplanted Chalmers as an eloquent interpreter to the language of the stars. Without the rapt and rushing force of Chalmers's style, he has a calm and deep hush of manner as he walks under the stupendous sublimities of his subject, which is very thrilling. Chalmers claps his hands in enthusiastic joy, as he looks up toward the gleaming midnight; Nichol bows his head before it. Chalmers is moved and moves us most to rapture; Nichol is moved and moves us most to wonder. Chalmers plunges like a strong swimmer into the stellar ocean, and ploughs his nervous way through its burning waves; Nichol walks beside it on tiptoe, and points in silent awe to its unutterable grandeur. While Chalmers shouts, "Glorious!"—while Carlyle sighs, "Ah! it's a sad sight"—Nichol, perhaps more forcibly, expresses his emotion by folding his arms, and speaking in whispers, or remaining dumb.

The second discourse is on the "Modesty of True Science," and is chiefly remarkable for its panegyric on Sir Isaac Newton—certainly the noblest tribute to that illustrious man ever paid, unless we except Thomson's fervid poem on his death. Yet, while panegyrising "modesty," the author makes one or two rather bold and unwarranted suppositions; for instance, that sin has probably found its way into other worlds—that the Eternal Son "may have had the government of many sinful worlds laid upon his shoulders"—and that the Spirit "may now be working with the fragments of another chaos, and educing order, and obedience, and harmony out of the wrecks of a moral rebellion, which reaches through all these spheres, and spreads disorder to the uttermost limits of our astronomy." Indeed, the great defect of these discourses is, that he is perpetually meeting assumptions with assumptions, and repelling one conjecture by another equally groundless.

In the third sermon he states the infidel argument as follows : —“ Such a humble portion of the universe as ours could never have been the object of such high and distinguishing attentions as Christianity has assigned to it. God would not have manifested himself in the flesh for the salvation of so paltry a world. The monarch of a whole continent would never move from his capital, and lay aside the splendor of royalty, and subject himself for months or for years to perils, and poverty, and persecution, and take up his abode in some small islet of his dominions, which, though swallowed by an earthquake, could not be missed amid the glories of so wide an empire ; and all this to regain the lost affection of a few families upon its surface. And neither would the Eternal Son of God—he who is revealed to us as having made all worlds, and as holding an empire amid the splendors of which the globe that we inherit is shaded in insignificance—neither would he strip himself of the glory he had with the Father before the world was, and light on this lower scene, for the purpose imputed to him in the New Testament. Impossible that the concerns of this puny ball, which floats its little round among an infinity of larger worlds, should be of such mighty account in the plans of the Eternal, or should have given birth in heaven to so wonderful a movement as the Son of God putting on the form of our degraded species, and sojourning among us, and sharing in all our infirmities, and crowning the whole scene of humiliation, by the disgrace and the agonies of a cruel martyrdom.”

We will not stop to object to the theological mis-statement in one of the sentences of this passage. Christ did not, could not lay aside the “splendor of royalty”—he merely veiled it from the eyes of men, and it was not “himself,” in the whole meaning of that expression, but simply his human nature, that was subjected to “perils, and poverty, and persecution.”

But, waiving this, let us notice how Chalmers proceeds to answer the objection. He does this first by dwelling, with much munificence and rhythmical flow of language, upon the extent of the Divine condescension ; and his picture of the powers and achievements of the microscope is exceedingly beautiful. Yet it is one-sided. For, if the microscope shows us Divine Providence watching over the very lowest hem and skirts of animal existence, does it not also show us rage, ani-

mosity, evil, and death burning on the very brink of nothing—a Waterloo in every water drop? Besides, the microscope serves only to prove the universal prevalence of certain laws; it does not discover any analogy to that special love and supernatural interference found in the history of Christianity. It proves simply that God condescends to care for every being he has condescended to create; but would never, previous to experience, suggest the possibility of God *saving*, by a peculiar and abnormal method, a race that had fallen. On such a subject, telescope and microscope are alike silent; they say nothing for it, but they say nothing against it. The whole discourse, therefore, we consider an eloquent evasion of the question, notwithstanding the magnificent burst with which it closes, the reading of which, by himself, we have already described.

In his fourth discourse he attempts to prove that man's moral history is known in distant parts of the creation; and thence to argue its vast importance and general bearings. The evidence he produces is entirely derived from Scripture, and is neither very abundant nor very strong. He tries to show, first, that "the history of the redemption of our species is known in other and distant parts of the creation; and then, secondly, indistinctly to guess at the fact that the redemption itself may stretch beyond the limits of the world we occupy."

In reference to the first, he tells us that Scripture "speaks most clearly and most decisively about the knowledge of man's redemption being disseminated among other orders of created intelligence than our own." And yet, strange to say, the first proof he produces of this is the conversation on Mount Tabor between Moses and Elias with Jesus, on the "decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem," as if these two glorified beings belonged to another "order of created intelligence" than ours—as if they were not the "spirits of just MEN made perfect." He next introduces the song of the angels, and the text "unto these things the angels desire to look"—forgetting that the angels are circulating perpetually through the universe; that they are the servants—the ministering spirits—of the good; and that it is impossible to argue from their knowledge of our earthly affairs to that of the myriads of stationary inhabitants of space—if such there be in the other

planets and systems of the universe. There had not then appeared Isaac Taylor's admirable paper entitled the "State of Seclusion," in which the author shows so strikingly the advantages which have accrued from the insulated position of the various worlds of space, as securing more completely the probation of moral beings. What Taylor means is this: could we, from this isle of earth, see *all* the consequences, whether of good or of bad, as manifested in the innumerable orbs, which he *supposes* to be replete with intellectual and moral life, we should be *driven*, not led, from vice and into virtue—so enormous would appear the superiority of the one over the other in its effects. But God has secluded us from other worlds, and them from us, that our will may have freer play in choosing good and refusing evil; that the great irrevocable choice may be less a matter of necessity and of terror, and more of voluntary consent. Hence, too, the deep shroud of darkness which Scripture keeps suspended over the secrets of the future world. Dr. Chalmers, too, in the passages he quotes about Christ's gathering into one all things in heaven and in earth, and about "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," saying "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne; and unto the Lamb for ever and ever"—does not advert to the fact that all this is to be done, and said, and sung, *after* this present system has passed. Meanwhile, there is not the most distant evidence that the inhabitants of other worlds, if such there be (for this, too, is a point of extreme uncertainty), know more of our moral state than we do of theirs, which is precisely nothing at all.

The fifth discourse of the series contains some most melting and eloquent descriptions of the sympathy felt for man in the distant places of the creation. Still, so far as argument is concerned, it does not help forward his point one step. For that man alone has fallen, is one assumption; and even supposing that he has, that this is known throughout the whole universe is another. Angels do know indeed that man is a sinner, and do feel for us; but angels can hardly be called inhabitants of the material creation at all; they are celestial couriers, winged flames passing through it; and it is only in-

cidentally that we know that even they sympathise with our low and lost estate. Again, too, we urge the principle of "seclusion;" and ask, besides, if the inhabitants of other planets (supposing such there be) are *unfallen*, might not the knowledge of a fallen earth damp their joy? if they *are* fallen, might it not encourage their rebellion?

The sixth sermon is perhaps the most powerful of the seven. *Fervet immensusque ruit.* Towards the close especially it becomes a torrent of fire. After describing the great contest of angels and demons over the dead Patroclus, Man, he says:

"But this wondrous contest will come to a close. Some will return to their loyalty, and others will keep by their rebellion; and in the day of the winding-up of the drama of this world's history, there will be made manifest to the myriads of the various orders of creation both the mercy and the vindicated majesty of the Eternal. Oh! on that day, how vain will this presumption of the infidel astronomy appear, when the affairs of men come to be examined in the presence of an innumerable company; and beings of loftiest nature are seen to crowd around the judgment-seat; and the Savior shall appear in our sky, with a celestial retinue, who have come with him from afar to witness all his doings, and to take a deep and solemn interest in all his dispensations; and the destiny of our species, whom the infidel would thus detach in solitary insignificance from the universe altogether, shall be found to merge and mingle with higher destinies; the good to spend their eternity with angels—the bad to spend their eternity with angels; the former to be re-admitted into the universal family of God's obedient worshippers—the latter to share in the everlasting pain and ignominy of the rebellious; the people of this planet to be implicated throughout the whole train of their never-ending history with the higher ranks and more extended tribes of intelligence."

This passage is not only exceedingly eloquent and solemn, but seems to contain the strongest argument in the volume for the importance of man. The only weak point in the sermon perhaps lies in his apparently supposing that the universe is *now* aware of this mighty contest which is going on between purely spiritual beings for the possession. As well say that all Europe was literally looking on Waterloo on the very day

of the battle when its fate was decided. This earth will not assume its real aspect of dignity and importance, till after its wonderful history is over, and perhaps itself burned up.

The seventh sermon is on the slender influence of mere taste and sensibility in matters of religion; and appears indeed to be an eloquent apology for the whole series, and a virtual admission that in it he had rather pleased the taste and touched the sensibility, than informed the judgment, confirmed the faith, or refuted the adversary. We look, in fact, upon this volume as not worthy, as a whole, of its author's talents. It is a mass of brilliant froth. The thought is slight and slender, when compared to the abundance of the verbiage which clothes it. The language is often loose and coarse to the last degree. The argument, so far as we know, never convinced a gainsayer; and, indeed, none but a very silly infidel could have been convinced by it: we were going to say that none but a very feeble thinker could even have started the objection, till we remembered, not only that it seems to have rested at one time like a load upon Chalmers's own soul—and he, need we say, as his "Bridgewater Treatise" proves, could be as subtle at times as he was eloquent always—but that Daniel Webster was long puzzled and kept back from embracing Christianity through its influence. But Webster, to be sure, thought generally like a lawyer, seldom like a legislator or philosopher. He was one of those men of whom Burke says "Aristotle, the great master of reasoning, cautions us, and with great weight and propriety, against a species of *delusive geometrical accuracy* in moral arguments, as the most fallacious of all sophistry."

Let us now try ourselves with all diffidence to meet the objection fairly and fully in the face; and we would do so, first, by asking what has magnitude to do with a moral question? secondly, what, above all, has magnitude to do with a moral question, unless it be proved to be peopled by moral beings? and, thirdly, what is magnitude compared to mind?

First, What has magnitude to do with a moral question? what has the size of a man to do with his soul? is not the mind the standard of the man? What has the size of a city to do with the moral character of its inhabitants? what have size, number, and quantity, to do with the intellectual or

moral interest, which may be or may not be connected with the plains of a country? Whether is Ben Nevis or Bannockburn the dearer to a Scottish heart—though the one is the prince of Scottish hills, and the other only a paltry plain, undistinguished except by a solitary stone, and by the immortal memories of patriotism and of courage which gather around that field wherein the “Scots who had wi’ Wallace bled” bade “Welcome to their gory bed, or to victory?” Whether is Mont Blanc or Morgarten the nobler object, though the one be the monarch of mountains, and the other only an obscure field, where the Swiss met and baffled their Austrian oppressors, and first in the shock was the arm of William Tell? Whether is dearer to the Christian’s mind Caucasus or Calvary?—the one the loftiest of Asia’s mountains, the other only a little hill, a mere dot on the surface of the globe? So may there not issue from this tiny earth of ours—from the noble deeds it has witnessed, from the high aspirations which have been breathed up from it, from the magnificent thoughts which have been conceived on its surface, from the eloquent words that have stirred its air into music, from the poets who have wrought its words into undying song, from the philosophers who have explained the secret of its laws, from the men of God who have knelt down in its temples—a tide of glory before which the lustre of suns and constellations shall tremble and melt away.

But, secondly,\* what has magnitude to do with a moral question, if it cannot be proved that that magnitude is peopled with moral beings? Science, indeed, may and does hope that each fair star has its own beautiful and happy race of immortal intelligences; but science does not *know*. For aught science knows, there may be no immortal intelligences except man, angels, God, and devils, in the wide creation. For aught science knows, those suns and systems may be seen only by our eyes and our telescopes; for aught she knows, the universe may only be beginning to be peopled, and earth have been selected as the first spot for the great colonization. The peopling of our own planet was a gradual process. Why may not

\*This was written and published years before the masterly treatise on the “Plurality of Worlds,” attributed to Whewell, appeared.

the same be concluded of the universe of which our earth is a part? May not earth in this sense be an Eden to other regions of the All? Are appearance and analogy pleaded as proofs that the universe is peopled throughout? Appearance and analogy here utter an uncertain sound; for are not all the suns, or what we call the continents of creation, seemingly burning masses uninhabitable by any beings we can even conceive of? Do not many of the planets, or islands, appear either too near or too remote from the central blaze to support animal existence? The moon (the only planet with which we are particularly acquainted) has manifestly not yet arrived at the state necessary for supporting living beings, and science remembers that innumerable ages passed ere even our globe was fitted for receiving its present population, and that, according to the researches of geology, the earth rolled round the sun for ages, a vast and weltering wilderness. Here, then, science is totally silent, or utters only a faltering "perhaps." Is it said, that but for intelligent beings space would be empty? How! empty if it contain an entire Deity in its every particle? Is God not society enough for his own creation? Shall you call the universe empty, if God be present in it, even though he were present alone? Science, indeed, grants it probable that much of the universe is already peopled; but she grants no more. But as long as his probability is not swelled to a certainty, it can never interfere in any way whatever with the fixed, solid, immutable evidences of our Christian faith.

We ask, thirdly,\* what is material magnitude compared to mind? The question is: Why did God, who made the vast creation, interfere to save the human spirit, at such immense expense, and by a machinery so sublime and miraculous! Now, in reply to this, we assert the ineffable dignity of the human spirit. The creation, large and magnificent as it is, is not equal in grandeur to one immortal mind. Majestic the universe is; but can it think, or feel, or imagine, or hope, or love? "Talk to me of the sun!"—one might say, standing up in all the conscious dignity of his own nature, "but the sun is not alive; he is but a dead luminary after all; I am alive, I nev-

\* We quote *this* passage from the "First Gallery," as necessary to our argument here.



er was dead, I never can die; I may therefore put my foot upon that proud orb, and say, I am greater than thou. The sun cannot understand the geometry of his own motion, nor the laws of his own radiating light. I can do both, and am, therefore, immeasurably greater than the sun. The sun cannot with all his rays write on flower, or grass, or the broad page of ocean, his Maker's name. A child of seven years old can, and is therefore greater than the sun. The sun cannot from his vast surface utter one articulate sound; he is dumb in his magnificence; but 'out of the mouth of babes and sucklings' God perfects praise. The sun cannot love one of the planets which revolve round his ray. You and I can love all beings; nay, were our heart large enough, we could, in the language of the German, 'Clasp the universe to our bosom, and keep it warm.' The sun shall be plucked from its sphere, and perish, but I have that within me which shall never die.

'The sun is but a spark of fire, a transient meteor in the sky;  
But I—immortal as his sire, shall never die!'

And if greater than the sun, I am greater than the entire universe. It might indeed rise and crush me, but I should know it was destroying me, whilst it would crush blindly and unconsciously. I should be conscious of *defeat*; it would not be conscious of *victory*. The universe may be too great now for the grasp of my intellect, but my mind, I feel, can grow to grasp it. The universe, in fact, is only the nursery to my immortal mind, and whether is greater—the nursery or the child? The universe, you may call it what you please; you may lavish epithet upon epithet of splendor upon it, if you please; but you can never call it one thing—you can never call it a spirit; and if not a spirit, it is but a great and glorious clod. But I am a spirit, though a spirit disguised in matter; an immortality, though an immortality veiled in flesh; a beam from the source of light, though a beam that has gone astray; and therefore I dare to predicate even of my own fallen nature, that there is more dignity, and grandeur, and value in it, than in the whole inanimate creation; and that to save no more but me, it were worth while for the Saviour to have descended, and for the Saviour to have died."

We pass to make a few closing remarks on some points connected with the "Star-eyed Science," premising that we are mere amateurs, and know very little of the details of the study.

We yield to no man in admiration of the splendors of the heavens. They are a book of beauty, opened up every night over our heads, and each beautiful line includes a great and living moral. But we think, first, that the terms "Infinity," and "Immensity," are unduly applied to them. Secondly, that they give us no new light as to the history or destiny of man. Thirdly, that the telescope, as a mental and magical instrument, has been overrated. Fourthly, that the inference of the insignificance of man, drawn from the vastness of the universe, is altogether illogical. Fifthly, that astronomical discovery has nearly reached its limits. Sixthly, that the astronomy of man's soul is infinitely grander than that of the starry heavens, and is but distantly related to it; and, finally, that there is no reason to believe that death and the immortality which lie beyond, will allow us to remain in those material regions of which the stars are the shining summits. We hope for our readers' indulgence as we try to explain more fully what we mean.

First. We hear astronomers often speaking of those "Infinities," those "Immensities;" words which, though used sometimes rhetorically, are always fitted to give a false impression to the general mind. The universe is *not* infinite. As well say of a drop of water that it is infinite, as that a universe is. The vastest and most complicated firmament is not one step nearer the abstract and absolute idea of Infinity, than is a curled shaving in a joiner's shop. The infinite aspect the Creation assumes is a mere illusion of our eye, the dimness of a weak and bounded vision. The universe is just the multiplication of a sand-grain or fire-particle, and by multiplying the finite, how can we reach the infinite? Who can, by *searching*, find out God? "To an inconceivably superior being," says Coleridge, "the whole fabric of Creation may appear as one *plain*, the distance between stars and systems seeming to him but as that between particles of earth to us;" say, rather, it is highly probable that this vast universe seems to God but as one distinctly rounded *pea*, swimming on the viewless ocean of that

true Infinite which is "higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

"A metaphysical difficulty," says Isaac Taylor (if we need clench a statement so obvious by authority), "prevents us from ever regarding the material universe as infinite." And if not infinite, what is it but an elongation and fiery exaggeration of any boy-bubble blown on the streets? Away, then, with the words which sound much, and mean nothing, of "infinity" and "immensity," applied to that mere scaffolding to the eternal and inner fabric, which is all our earthly eyes or telescopes now or ever can possibly behold!

Secondly. Those enormous discoveries of the Newtonian and Herschellian heavens have not really told us anything new in reference to the great mystery of man—of his being, history, destiny, or relation to God. They have simply transferred and magnified the difficulties by which we are environed on this isle of earth. They have not, hitherto, shed one beam of light on any moral theme. It is, as yet, utterly uncertain, for all the stars can teach us, whether the universe beyond our globe be peopled or not; on the moral state of their populations (if populations there be) the sky, however strictly questioned or cross-questioned, remains quite silent. In fact, a large crowd of silent human faces, looking up towards an uncommon phenomenon in the heavens, reflect as much light *up* on it, as do the stars *down* upon the anomalous and awful condition of the human family. Blank ignorance, blind astonishment, or helpless pity, are all the feelings with which even imagination can invest their still, persevering, yet solemn gaze. Foster, in one of his journals, seems rather to rejoice in the notion that they are made of *fire*; because in this there is one link connecting us with the remotest luminaries of heaven. Some philosophers doubt, we believe, if this be a fact; but, at all events, we wonder that he did not see, on his own showing, and in accordance with his own gloomy notions, that the universe might be literally called one vast hell; a "burning fiery furnace," to be quenched only in the final extinction of all things. If the stars *are* fire, it may be a fire in which all the earths and alkalis around them are slowly, but certainly, to be consumed. And thus the great mirror of the midnight heavens becomes rather a reflector of the austere purposes

of the Divine Destructiveness, than of the prosperous career of even regenerated man. In fact, we humbly conceive that the discovery of a new family of animalculæ, or of a new gallery of minerals, would cast as much light upon human nature and history as the revelation of firmaments upon firmaments of what seems distant and inscrutable flame.

Thirdly. The telescope, as a mental and magical instrument, has been overrated. The imagination of a poet, in a single dream, has often immeasurably outrun all its revelations. What has it told us, after all, but that our sun, a bright and burning point, has innumerable duplicates throughout space, and that these duplicates, by their position near each other, have assumed certain shapes, which are, however, perpetually shifting and changing, like the clouds on a windy day, in proportion to the power of the instrument which surveys them? In truth, there are views of astronomy in Addison's "Spectator," a century old, as sublime as any written since. And what have the two Herschells, or Arago, or Nichol, done to answer the questions—What is a sun, what is a system, what is a comet, what is a firmament, or what is the one "fiery particle" which pervades and forms, it is said, by expansion the whole? It is as if a man, questioned as to the essence of the matter constituting an umbrella, were to reply by *unfurling* it, and deeming that thus the query was answered. The telescope, in one word, has only broadened the periphery of our view, but has not admitted us really into one of the secrets of heaven; the mystery of the atom has merely been transferred, *unsolved*, to that of the Star-universe.

Fourthly. The inference of the insignificance of man, from the magnitude of the Creation, as we have already hinted, is miserably illogical. A man, in reality, is as much overborne by the size of a hill or a house, as by that of the Herschellian skies. A mountain is a noble object; but why? because man sees it and sheds the meaning and the glory of his own soul over it. A sun is but a burnished breastplate till the same process passes over it, and man has said of it, in reverent imitation of the Demiurgic Artist, "It is very good." The stars too, must all wait in the ante-chamber of the human soul to receive their homage, to be told of their numbers, and to listen to their names. Even although these splendid bodies

were peopled, man has no evidence that those beings are greater or purer than himself, any more than he has evidence that snow and torrid sunshine, anxiety, misery, and death, are confined to his sphere; a sphere which, dark, torn, and ruptured, to his eye, is (as the author of "Festus" hath it) "shining fair, whole, and spotless," a "living well of light," to spectators in the far-off ether. What, in fact, are the increasing and receding firmaments of space, but the steps of a ladder on which man is climbing every year, without coming nearer to his great ultimate inheritance—Space, Eternity, and God.

Fifthly. It is clear to us that astronomical discovery has nearly reached its limit. That God designed to it a distinct and not distant period, seems plain from the separation which is effected of other worlds from ours by the nature of the human eye, by distance, and by that *dancing* phenomenon in the objects which we are told increases with the power of the telescope, and which makes the stars reel like drunkards, instead of sitting sober before the calm pictorial power of the instrument. All our recent cosmogonies, too, such as the nebular hypothesis, have been utterly exploded. And it is very curious how the world nearest us (the moon) seems the most perverse and inscrutable of all the heavenly puzzles; and it seems strange to us how, having looked so long on the absurdities of our world, and particularly on the theories propounded about itself, it has hitherto forborne to laugh! By and by, we suspect, man, even with Lord Rosse's telescope in his hand, may be seen stretching over the great gulf a baffled hand, and foot, and eye, baffled because he has reached at last the limits of his earthly platform.

Sixthly. But why should he, therefore, repine, or sit down and weep? "Can his own soul afford no scope?" Are there no stars within, no firmaments of central, yet celestial, fire? Astronomy is doubtless a magnificent study, but the mind which has made the telescope as an assistant eye for its investigation, is surely as worthy of investigation, nay, far more so. What comet so wonderful as the human will? What sun so warm and mysterious as the human heart? What double-orbed Gemini to be compared with the twin eyes of man?—What firmament is like the wiry, waving, knotted, intesselated

and far-stretching brain, sending out its nervous undulations, even as the spiral nebula sends forth its thin films of suns? What conception of a universe, however vast and complex, can be named in mystery, with man—scarce a mathematical point in size, and yet spanning earth, measuring ocean, analysing the clouds and the skies above him, poetizing the dust below his feet, worshipping God, and sending out his careering thoughts into Eternity, and yet, like his progenitor Adam, while aiming perpetually to be as a God, as often losing his balance, and becoming inferior to the brute? Why seek so eagerly to explore firmaments, till we have explored the depths which lie enclosed, yet beseechingly open, in our own natures? And alas! no light do all the fires of all the firmaments, however beautifully concentrated and condensed by the power of poetical genius, cast upon the mystery of man's moral condition, his nature as a sinner, or the hope he has of forgiveness and everlasting life!

We take leave of this brief view of a magnificent theme, by uttering (seventhly) what may appear our most paradoxical assertion—namely, that there is no reason to believe that death and immortality will permit the emancipated soul to remain amid these present starry splendors. However bright, and even, at times, inviting they may seem, they contain no home for us after we are freed from these tabernacles of clay. We often hear men talking as if, somehow, they went up, after death, among the heavenly bodies. It were wrong in us to dogmatise on any such question; but it seems more probable, and more scriptural, too, that we pass, at death, amid a purely spiritual scenery, as well as into a purely spiritual state—or, at least, that the *grosser phenomena of matter* will be then as invisible to us as are now the *microscopic worlds*. This conviction came upon us some two years ago, with a sudden and startling force, which we felt more than enough for our own minds. Taking up, shortly after, one of the strange reveries of poor Edgar Poe, we were astonished to find the following language: “At death, these creatures, enjoying the ultimate life—immortality, act all things, and pass everywhere by mere volition—*indwelling not the stars*, which to us seem the sole palpabilities, and for the accommodation of which we blindly deem space created—but that SPACE itself—that infi-

nity, of which the true substantive vastness swallows up the *star shadows*—blotting them out as nonentities from the perception of the angels." And again: "the stars, through what we consider their materiality, escape the angelic sense, just as the unparticled matter or space, through what we consider its immateriality, eludes the perception of organic and incarnate beings."

Inferences of much interest might be drawn from these cursory remarks. We might infer, for instance, that there was, and is, no alternative for Man—but Revelation or Despair. Nature can, at the utmost, do little for us, and can tell us very little. This the highest of philosophers have ever felt (including some of the Alchymists), and hence they have tried to *get behind nature*—and to get so behind it as to turn it to their will. In this they have all miserably failed; and ever shall. One only possessed this ineffable secret—one only ever stood behind the tremendous veil of creation—and why?—Because he was originally divine—because he came from the Excellent Glory (which *is*, perhaps, another name for that "unparticled matter," that sublime reality of existence which is within all things), as well as confirmed his power by "privilege of virtue." HE alone, even in the days of his flesh, with open face, looked at the Glory of God; and this power he gives already in some measure, and shall yet more fully bestow upon his faithful and simple-hearted followers, that they, too, may behold, as in a glass—mightier than the mirror of all the stars—the inmost glory of the Lord.

Once more, how overwhelmingly grand the views opened up by such thoughts as these! Here are new heavens and a new earth. Here, in every death, is a rehearsal of that scene in which the heavens are to flee away. The sight of those fair, yet terrible and tantalizing heavens of ours is at the death-moment of every Christian exchanged for that of spiritual scenes, which no eye hath seen, and no ear heard. That majestic universe, which was the nursery of the budding soul, dissolves like a dream, and that soul is admitted within the veil of the unseen, and begins to behold matter *as it is*, space *as it is*, God *as he is*, and to know now what is the meaning of the words, "the light *inaccessible* and full of glory." Nor will the soul, thus introduced, sigh for the strange and fiery "star-

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shadows" which surrounded its infancy. There was much in them that was beautiful; but there was much also that was fearful, perplexing, and sad. But here, in this spirit-land, the sun of truth shines. *That* city has no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine on it. The mind shall there begin to see without cloud, or shadow, or reflected radiance, Knowledge, Essence, Eternity, God, and shall look back upon the stars as but the bright toys of its nursery, childish things it has surmounted and put away. Further we dare not penetrate—here let the curtain drop—but let it drop to the music of one solemn word, from the only Book which has given us authentic and commanding tidings from that inner world. "Seeing, therefore, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"



# A Cluster of New Poets.

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## NO. I.—SYDNEY YENDYS.

THIS book\* we hesitate not to pronounce the richest volume of recent poetry next to "Festus." It is a "wilderness" of thought—a sea of towering imagery and surging passion. Usually a man's first book is his richest, containing, as it generally does, all the good things which had been accumulating in his portfolio for years before he published. But while "The Roman" was full of beauties, "Balder" is overflowing, and the beauties, we think, are of a rarer and profounder sort. There was much poetry in "The Roman," but there was more rhetoric. Indeed, many of the author's detractors, while granting him powers of splendid eloquence, denied him the possession of the purely poetic element. "Balder" must, unquestionably, put these to silence, and convince all worth convincing, that Yendys is intensely and transcendently a poet.

In two things only does "Balder" yield to "The Roman." It has, as a story, little interest, being decidedly subjective rather than objective; and, secondly, its writing is not, as a whole, so clear. In "The Roman," he was almost always distinctly, dazzlingly clear. The Monk was never in a mist for a moment; but Balder, as he has a Norse name, not unfrequently speaks or bellows from the centre of northern darkness. We speak, we must say, however, after only one reading; perhaps a second may serve to clear up a good deal that seems obscure and chaotic.

\* "Balder." By the author of "The Roman."

The object of the poet is to show that natural goodness, without the Divine guidance, is unable to conduct even the loftiest of the race to any issue but misery and despair. This he does in the story of Balder—a man of vast intelligence, and aspiring to universal intellectual power—who, partly through the illness of his wife, represented as the most amiable of women, and partly through his own unsatisfied longings of soul, is reduced to absolute wretchedness, and is left sacrificing her life to his disquietude and baffled ambition. The poem has one or two interlocutors besides Balder and Amy, but consists principally of soliloquies uttered and songs sung by these two in alternate scenes, and has very little dramatic interest. It is entitled “Balder, Part First;” a title which pretty broadly hints that a second poem—with a far sublimer argument (the inevitable sequel of the former), showing how, since natural goodness fails in reforming the world, or making any man happy, Divine goodness must be expected to perform the work—may be looked for.

We pass from the general argument and bearing of the poem, to speak more in detail of its special merits and defects. The great merit of the book, as we have already hinted, is its Australian wealth of thought and imagery. Bailey must look after his laurels; Tennyson, Smith, and Bigg are all in this one quality eclipsed by Yendys. Nor are the pieces of gold small and of little value; many of them are large nuggets—more precious than they are sparkling. Here, for instance, is a cluster of noble similitudes, reminding you of Jeremy Taylor's thick rushing “So have I seen:”—

“Nature from my birth  
 Confess'd me, as one who in a multitude  
 Confesseth her beloved, and makes no sign;  
 Or as one all unsounded in her deep haunts,  
 If her true love come on her unaware,  
 Hastes not to hide her breast, nor is afraid;  
 Or as a mother, 'mid her sons, displays  
 The arms their glorious father wore, and, kind,  
 In silence, with discerning love commits  
 Some lesser danger to each younger hand,  
 But to the conscious eldest of the house  
 The naked sword; or as a sage, amid  
 His pupils in the peopled portico,  
 Where all stand equal, gives no precedence  
 But by intercalated look and word

Of equal seeming, wise but to the wise,  
Denotes the favor'd scholar from the crowd ;  
Or as the keeper of the palace-gate  
Denies the gorgeous stranger, and his pomp  
Of gold, but at a glance, although he come  
In fashion as a commoner, unstarr'd,  
Lets the prince pass."

By what a strong, rough, daring figure does Balder describe  
the elements of his power :—

" Thought, Labor, Patience,  
And a strong Will, that, being set to boil  
*The broth of Hecate, would shred his flesh*  
*Into the caldron, and stir deep, with arms*  
*Flay'd to the seething bone, ere there default*  
*One tittle from the spell—these should not strive*  
*In vain !*"

" The repose  
Of Beauty—where she lieth bright and still  
As some spent angel, dead-asleep in light  
On the most heavenward top of all this world,  
Wing-weary."

Of what follows death he says—

" The first, last secret all men hear, and none  
Betray."

" My hand shakes ;  
But with the trembling eagerness of him  
*Who buys an Indian kingdom with a bead."*

" Fancy, like the image that our boors  
Set by their kine, doth milk her of her tears,  
And loose the terrible unsolved distress  
Of tumid Nature."

" Men of drug and scalpel still are men.  
I call them the gnomes  
Of science, miners who scarce see the light,  
Working within the bowels of the world  
Of beauty."

" Love  
Makes us all poets——"

" From the mount  
Of high transfiguration you come down  
Into your common lifetime, as the diver  
Breathes upper air a moment ere he plunge,  
And by mere virtue of that moment, lives  
In breathless deeps, and dark. We poets live  
Upon the height, saying, as one of old,  
' Let us make tabernacles : it is good  
To be here ' "

"Dauntless Angelo,  
Who drew the Judgment, in some daring hope  
That, seeing it, the gods could not depart  
From so divine a pattern."

"Sad Alighieri, like a waning moon  
Setting in storm behind a grove of bays."

The descriptions which follow, in pages 91 and 92—of Milton and Shakspeare—are very eloquent, but not, it appears to us, very characteristic. They are splendid evasions of their subjects. Reading Milton is *not* like swimming the Alps, as an ocean sinking and swelling with the billows; it is rather like trying to fly to heaven, side by side with an angel who is at full speed, and does not even see his companion—so eagerly is he straining at the glorious goal which is fixing his eye, and from afar flushing his cheek. Nor do we much admire this:—

"Either his muse  
Was the recording angel, or that hand  
Cherubic which fills up the Book of Life,  
Caught what the last relaxing gripe let fall  
By a death-bed at Stratford, and henceforth  
Holds Shak-peare's pen."

No, no, dear Sydney Yendys, Shakspeare was no cherub, or seraph either; he was decidedly an "earth spirit," or rather, he was just honest, play-acting, ale-drinking Will of Stratford, with the most marvellous daguerreotypic brow that ever man possessed, and with an immense fancy, imagination, and subtle, untrained intellect besides. He knew well a "Book of Life;" but it was not "the Lamb's!"—it was the book of the wondrous, living, loving, hating, maddening, laughing, weeping heart of man. Call him rather a diver than a cherub, or, better still, with Hazlitt and Scott, compare him to that magician in the eastern tale who had the power of *shooting his soul* into all other souls and bodies, and of looking at the universe through *all human* eyes. We are, by this comparison of Shakspeare to an angel, irresistibly reminded of Michael Lambourne in "Kenilworth," who, after in vain trying to enact Arion, at last tears off his vizard, and cries "Cog's bones!" He was none of Arion, or Orion either, but honest Mike Lambourne, that had been drinking Her Majesty's health from morning till midnight. Lambourne was just

as like Orion, or his namesake the archangel Michael, as Shakespeare like a cherubic recorder.

Now for another cluster of minor, but exquisite beauties ere we come to give two or three superb passages :—

"Sere leaf, that quiverest through the sad-still air ;  
Sere leaf, that waverest down the sluggish wind ;  
Sere leaf, that whirlest on the autumn gust,  
*Free in the ghastly anarchy of death :*  
The sudden gust that, *like a headman wild,*  
*Uplifteth beauty by her golden hair,*  
To show the world that she is dead indeed."

"The bare hill top  
Shines near above us ; I feel like a child  
Nursed on his grandsire's knee, *that longs to stroke*  
*The bald bright forehead ; shall we climb ?*"

"She look'd in her surprise  
As when the Evening Star, *ta'en unaware,*  
*While fearless she pursues across the Heaven*  
*Her Lover-Sun,* and on a sudden stands  
*Confest in the pursuit,* before a world  
Upgasing, in her maiden innocence  
Disarms us, and so looks, that she becomes  
A worship evermore."

"The order'd pomp and sacred dance of things."

"This is that same hour  
That I have seen before me as a star  
Seen from a rushing comet through the black  
And forward night, which orbe, and orbe, and orbe,  
Till that which was a shining spot in space  
Flames out between us and the universe,  
And burns the heavens with glory."

We quoted his description of Night once before from MS.  
We give it again, however :—

"And lo ! the last strange sister, but though last,  
Elder and haught, called Night on earth, in heaven  
Nameless, for in her far youth she was given,  
Pale as she is, to pride, and did bedeck  
Her bosom with innumerable gems.  
And God, He said, ' Let no man look on her  
For ever ;' and, begirt with this strong spell,  
The Moon in her wan hand, she wanders forth,  
Seeking for some one to behold her beauty ;  
And whoso'er she cometh, eyelids close,  
And the world sleeps."

This description has been differently estimated. Some have called it magnificent, and others fantastic ; some a matchless

gem, and others a colossal conceit. But we think there can be but one opinion about the following picture of Evening. It seems to us as exquisitely beautiful as anything in Spenser, Wordsworth, or Shelly :—

“ And seest thou her who *kneeleth clad in gold*  
 And *purple*, with a *flush upon her cheek*,  
 And upturn'd eyes, *full of the love and sorrow*  
*Of other worlds* ? 'Tis said, that when the sons  
 Of God did walk the earth, she *loved a star*.”

Here the description should have stopped, and here we stop it, wishing that the author had. But it is curious and characteristic, not so much of the genius as of the temperament (or rather of bodily sufferings influencing that temperament) of this gifted poet, that he often sinks and falls on the very threshold of perfection. Another word, and all were gained, to the very measure and stature of Miltonic excellence; but the word comes not, or the wrong word comes instead; and as Yendys, like the tiger, takes no second spring, the whole effect is often lost. We notice the same in Shelley, Keats, and especially in Leigh Hunt, who has made and spoiled many of the finest poetic pictures in the world. Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Alexander Smith, are signal in this, that all their set descriptions and pet passages are finished to the last trembling articulation; complete even to a comma. Yendys has, perhaps, superior, or equal genius; he has also an equal will and desire to elaborate; but, alas! while the spirit is always willing, the flesh is often weak.

Speaking of the Resurrection to Amy, Balder says :—

“ My childhood's dream. Is it a dream? For thou  
 Art such a thing as one might think to see  
 Upon a footstone, *sitting in the sun*,  
 Beside a *broken grave*.”

“ I have been like  
 A prophet fallen on his prostrate face  
 Upon the hill of fire.”

Such is the prophet above. Mark him now, as he comes down to mankind :—

“ In the form  
 Of manhood I will get me down to man!  
 As one goes down from Alpine top with snows  
 Upon his head, I, who have stood so long

On other Alps, will go down to my race,  
*Snow'd on with somewhat out of Divine air;*  
 And *merely walking* through them with a *step*  
 God-like to music, *like the golden sound*  
*Of Phebus' shoulder'd arrows*, I will shake  
 The laden manna round me as I shake  
 Dews from this morning tree."

He has, two or three pages after this, a strange effusion, called the "Song of the Sun," which we predict shall divide opinion still more than his "Night." Some will call it worthy of Goethe; others will call it a forced extravaganza, a half-frenzied imitation of Shelley's "Cloud." We incline to a somewhat intermediate notion. At the first reading, it seemed to us to bear a suspicious resemblance, not to Shelley's "Cloud," but to that tissue of noisy nonsense (where, as there was no reason, there ought at least to have been rhyme), Warren's "Lily and the Bee." Hear this, for instance. Mark, it is Sol that speaks:—

"Love, love, love, how beautiful, oh love!  
 Art thou well-awaken'd, little flower?  
 Are thine eyelids open, little flower?  
 Are they cool with dew, oh little flower?  
     Ringdove, Ringdove,  
 This is my golden finger;  
 Between the upper branches of the pine  
 Come forth, come forth, and sing unto my day."

Who will encore the sun in such ditties as these? But he has some more vigorous strains, worthy almost of that voice wherewith Goethe, in his "Prologue to Faust," has represented him making "music to the spheres:"—

"I will spend day among you like a king!  
 Your water shall be wine because I reign!  
 Arise, my hand is open, it is day!  
 Rise! as men *strike a bell, and make it music*,  
 So have I struck the earth, and made it day.  
 As one blows a trumpet through the valleys,  
 So from my golden trumpet I blow day.  
 White-favor'd day is sailing on the sea,  
 And, like a sudden harvest in the land,  
*The windy land is waving gold with day!*  
     I have done my task;  
 Do yours. And what is this that I have given,  
 And wherefore? Look ye to it! As ye can,  
 Be wise and foolish to the end. For me,  
 I under all heavens go forth, praising God."

Well sung, old Baal! Thou hast become a kind of Christian in these latter days. But we have seen a far stronger, less mystic, and clearer song attributed to thy lips before, although Yendys has not. *His*, as a whole, is not worthy either of thee or himself!

But what beautiful words are these about the sun's darling—Summer—immediately below this Sun-song?

Alas! that one  
Should use the days of summer but to live,  
And breathe but as the needful element  
*The strange, superfluous glory of the air!*  
Nor rather stand apart in awe beside  
Th' untouch'd Time, and saying o'er and o'er,  
In love and wonder, 'These are summer-days.' "

We quote but one more of these random and ransomless gems:—

"The Sublime and beautiful,  
*Eternal twins*, one dark, one fair;  
She leaning on her grand heroic brother,  
As in a picture of some old romaunt."

We promised next to quote one or two longer passages. We wish we had room for all the description of Chamouni, which, like the scene, is unapproachable—the most Miltonic strain since Milton—and this, because it accomplishes its sublime effects merely by sublime thought and image, almost disdaining aught but simple and colloquial words. Yet we must give a few scattered stones from this new Alp in descriptive literature—this, as yet, the masterpiece of its author's genius:—

"Chamouni, 'mid sternest Alps,  
The gentlest valley; bright meandering track  
Of summer, when she winds among the snows  
From land to land. Behold its fairest field  
Beneath the bold-scar'd forehead of the hills  
Low lying, like a heart of sweet desires,  
Pulsing all day a living beauty deep  
Into the sullen secrets of the rocks,  
Tender as Love amid the Destinies  
And Terrors; whereabouts the great heights stand,  
Down-gazing, like a solemn company  
Of grey heads met together to look back  
Upon a far-fond memory of youth."  
"There being old  
All days and years they maunder on their thrones



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Mountainous mutterings, or through the vale  
 Roll the long roar from startled side to side,  
 When whose, lifting up his sudden voice  
 A moment, speaketh of his meditation,  
 And thinks again. There shalt thou learn to stand  
 One in that company, and to commune  
 With them, saying, 'Thou, oh Alp, and thou and thou,  
 And I.' Nathless, proud equal, look thou take  
 Heed of thy peer, lest he perceive thee not—  
 Lest the wind blow his garment, and the hem  
 Crush thee, or lest he stir, and the mere dust  
 In the eternal folds bury thee quick."

Coleridge, in his "Hymn to Mont Blanc"—a hymn, of which it is the highest praise to say that it is equal to the subject, to Thomson's hymn at the end of "The Seasons," to Milton's hymn put into the mouth of our first parents, and to this grand effusion of Sydney Yendys—says,

"Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,  
 And straight stood still,  
 Motionless torrents—silent cataracts!"

Balder has thus nobly expanded, if he ever (which we doubt) thought of the Coleridgean image:—

"The ocean of a frozen world;  
 A marble storm in *monumental* rage;  
 Passion at nought, and strength still strong in vain—  
 A wrestling giant, spell-bound, but not dead,  
 As though the universal deluge pass'd  
 These confines, and when forty days were o'er,  
 Knew the set time obedient, and arose  
 In haste. But Winter *lifted up his hand*,  
 And stayed the everlasting sign, which strives  
 For ever to return. Cold crested tides,  
 And cataracts more white than wintry foam,  
*Eternally in act of the great leap*  
*That never may be ta'en*—these fill the gorge,  
 And rear upon the steep uplifted waves  
 Immovable, that proudly *feign to go*."

There follow a number of verses, striving like ante-natal ghosts for an incarnation worthy of their grandeur, but not so clearly representing the magnificent idea in the author's mind to ordinary readers as we might have wished. Yet all this dim gulf of thought and image is radiant, here and there, with poetry. But how finely this passage sweetens and softens the grandeur before and after:—

" Here, in the lowest vale,  
 Sit we beside the torrent, till the goats  
 Come tinkling home at eve, with pastoral horn,  
 Slow down the winding way, plucking sweet grass  
 Amid the yellow pansies and harebells blue.

The milk is warm,  
 The cakes are brown;  
 The flax is spun,  
 The kine are dry;  
 The bed is laid,  
 The children sleep;  
 Come, husband, come  
 To home and me.

So sings the mother as she milks within  
 The chalet near thee, singing so for him  
 Whom every morn she sendeth forth alone  
 Into the waste of mountains, to return  
 At close of day, *like a returning soul*  
*Out of the Infinite*: lost in the whirl  
 Of clanging systems, and the wilderness  
 Of all things, but to one remember'd *tryste*,  
 One human heart, and unforgotten cell,  
 True in its censeless self, and in its time  
 Restored."

Our readers will notice, in these and the foregoing extracts, a vast improvement over "The Roman" in the music of the versification. The verse of "The Roman" was constructed too much on the model of Byron, who often closes and begins his lines with expletives and weak words. The verse of Yendys is much more Miltonic. We give, as a specimen of this, and as one of the finest passages in the poem, the following description of Morn:—

" Lo, Morn,  
 When she stood forth at universal prime,  
 The angels shouted, and the dews of joy  
 Stood in the eyes of earth. While here she reign'd,  
 Adam and Eve were full of orisons,  
 And could not sin; and so she won of God,  
 That ever when she walketh in the world,  
 It shall be Eden And around her come  
 The happy wonts of early Paradise.  
 Again the mist ascendeth from the earth,  
 And watereth the ground; and at the sign,  
 Nature, that silent saw our wo, breaks forth  
 Into her olden singing; near and far  
 To full and voluntary chorus tune  
 Spontaneous throats.

*Morn hath no past.*  
 Primeval, perfect, she, not born to toil,

Steppeth from under the great weight of life,  
And stands as at the first.

As love, that hath his cell  
In the deep secret heart, doth with his breath  
Enrich the precincts of his sanctuary,  
And glorify the brow, and tint the cheek;  
As in a summer-garden, one beloved,  
Whom roses hide, unseen fills all the place  
With happy presence; as to the void soul,  
Beggard with famine and with drought, lo, God!  
And there is great abundance; so comes more,  
Plenishes all things, and completes the world."

We could select a hundred passages of equal merit; but, as faithful critics, are bound now to take notice, and that at some little length, of what we think the defects of this remarkable poem.

We think that the two main objections to "Balder" will be monotony and obscurity. We will not say of the hero, what an admirer of Yendys said of the Monk in "The Roman," that he is a great bore and humbug; but we will say that he talks too much, and does too little. The poem is little else than one long soliloquy—a piece of thinking aloud; and this kind of mental dissection, however masterly, begins, toward the end of 282 pages, to fatigue the reader. "Balder" is in *this* respect a poem of the Manfred and Cain school, but is far longer, and thus palls more on the attention than they. A more fatal objection is the great obscurity of much in this poem. The story does not pervade it, as a clear road passes through a noble landscape, or climbs a lofty hill, distinct even in its windings, and forming a line of light, connecting province with province: it is a footpath piercing dark forests, and often muffled and lost amid their umbrage. The wailings of Balder toward the close become oppressive, inarticulate, and half-frenzied; and from the lack of interest connected with him as a person, seem unnatural, and produce pain rather than admiration. This obscurity of Yendys has been, as we hinted before, growing on him. We saw few traces of it in "The Roman." It began first to appear in some smaller poems he contributed to the "Athenæum," and has, we trust, reached its climax in the latter pages and scenes of "Balder." It is produced partly by his love of personification and allegory—figures in which he often indeed

greatly excels; partly by a diseased subtlety of introspective thought; partly by those fainting-fits to which his demon (like a very different being, Giant Despair in the "Pilgrim") is subject at certain times, and partly by a pedantry of language, which is altogether unworthy of so masculine a genius.

Take two specimens of this last-mentioned fault:—

" Adjusting every witness of the soul,  
By such external warrants I do reach  
Herself; the centre and untaken core  
Of this enchanted castle, whose far lines  
And strong circumvallations, in and in  
Concentring, I have carried, but found not  
The foe that makes them deadly; and I stand  
Before these most fair walls; and know he lies  
Contain'd, and in the wont of savage war  
Prowl round my scathless enemy, and plot,  
Where, at what time, with what consummate blow,  
To storm his last retreat, and sack the sense  
That dens her fierce decease."

The second is worse, with the exception of the first four lines:—

" As one should trace  
An angel to the hill wherefrom he rose  
To heaven, and on whose top the vacant steps,  
In march progressive, with no backward print,  
A sudden cease. Sometimes, being swift, I meet  
His fallen mantle, torn off in the wind  
Of great ascent, whereof the *Attalic* pomp  
Between mine eyes and him perchance conceals  
The *bare celestial*. Whose still happier speed  
Shall look up to him, while the *blinding toy*,  
In far perspective, is but as a plume  
Dropp'd from the eagle? Whose *talarian feet*  
Shall stand unshod before him while he spreads  
His pinions?"

His description of the heroine, with all its exquisite touches, is considerably spoiled by a similar unwise elaboration and intricacy of language:—

" But when the year was grown  
And sweet by warmer sweet to nuptial June,  
The *flowery adolescence* slowly fill'd,  
Till, in a *passion of roses*, all the time  
Flush'd, and around the glowing heavens made suit,  
And onward through the *rank and burnum days*," &c.

There is a mixture of fine fancy with the quaintness and odd phraseology of what follows :—

"She came in September,  
And if she were o'erlaid with lily leaves,  
*And substantiv'd by mere content of deus,*  
Or limb'd of flower-stalks and sweet pedicles,  
Or make of golden dust from thigh of bees,  
Or caught of morning mist, or the unseen  
Material of an odor, *her pure text*  
Could seem no more remote from the corrupt  
And seething compound of our common flesh!"

A splendid passage near this is utterly spoiled by language as apparently affected as anything in Hunt's "Foliage," or Keats' "Endymion:"—

'Nature thus—  
The poet Nature singing to herself—  
Did make her in sheer love, having delight  
Of all her work, and doing all for joy,  
And built her like a temple wherein cost  
Is absolute; dark beam and hidden raft  
Shittim; each secret work and covert use  
Fragrant and golden; all the virgin walls  
Pure, and within, without, *prive and apert.*  
From buried plinth to viewless pinnacle,  
Enrich'd to God."

In justice, we must add one of the better passages of this very elaborate, and in many points signally felicitous description :

"Yet more I loved  
An art, which of all others seem'd the voice  
And argument, rare art, at better close  
A chosen day, worn like a jewel rare  
To beautify the beauteous, and make bright  
The twilight of some sacred festival  
Of love and peace. Her happy memory  
Was many poesies, and when serene  
Beneath the favoring shades, and the first star  
She audibly remember'd, they who heard  
Believed the Muse no fable. As that star  
Unsullied from the skies, out of the shrine  
Of her dear beauty beautifully came  
The beautiful, untinged by any taint  
Of mortal dwelling, neither flush'd nor pale,  
Pure in the naked loveliness of heaven,  
Such and so graced was she."

Smith and Yendys differ very materially in their conception

of women. Smith's females are houris in a Mahometan heaven; those of Yendys are angels in the Paradise of our God. Smith's emblem of woman is a rich and luscious rose, bending to every breath of wind, and wooing every eye; that of Yendys is a star looking across gulfs of space and galaxies of splendor, to one chosen earthly lover, whose eyes alone respond to the mystic messages of the celestial bride. Smith's idea of love, though not impure, is passionate; that of Yendys is more Platonic than Plato's own. We think that the true, the human, the poetic, and the Christian idea of love, includes and compounds the sensuous and the spiritual elements into one—a *tertium quid*—diviner, shall we say? because more complete than either; and which Milton and Coleridge (in his "Love") have alone of our poets adequately represented. Shelley, like Yendys, is too spiritual; Keats, like Smith, is too sensuous. Shakspeare, we think, makes woman too much the handmaid, instead of the companion, of man: his yielding, bending shadow, not his sister and friend:—

"Stronger Shakspeare felt for *man* alone."

Ere closing this critique, we have to mention one or two conclusions in reference to Yendys' genius, which this book has deeply impressed on our minds. First, his *forte* is not the drama or the lyrical poem. The lyrics in this poem are numerous, but none of them equal to Smith's "Garden and Child," or to his own "Winter Night," in "The Roman;" none of them entirely worthy of his genius. Nor is he strikingly dramatic in the management of his scenes and situations. He should give us next, either a great prose work, developing his peculiar theory of things, in the bold, rich, and eloquent style of those articles he contributed to "The Palladium," "The Sun," and "The Eclectic;" or he should bind himself up to the task he has already in his eye, that of constructing a great epic poem. We know no writer of the age who, if he will but clarify somewhat his style, and select some stern, high, continuous narrative for his theme, is so sure to succeed in this forsaken walk of the Titans. The poet who has coped with the Coliseum, the most magnificent production of man's art, and with Chamouni, the grandest of God's earthly works, need shrink from no topic, however lofty; nay, the loftier his theme the better.

## NO. II.—ALEXANDER SMITH.

THERE is something exceedingly sweet but solemn in the strain of thought suggested by the appearance of a new and true poet. Well is his uprise often compared to that of a new star arising in the midnight. What is he? Whence has he come? Whither is he going? And how long is he to continue to shine? Such are questions which are alike applicable to the planet and to the poet. A new poet, like a new planet, is another proof of the continued existence of the creative energy of the "Father of Spirits." He is a new messenger and mediator between the Infinite and the race of man. Whither rising or falling, retreating or culminating, in aphelion or in perihelion, he is continually an instructor to his kind. There is never a moment when he is not *seen* by some one, and when to be seen is, of course, to shine. And if his mission be thoroughly accomplished, the men of future ages are permitted either to share in the shadow of his splendor, or to fill their empty urns with the relict radiance of his beams.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever;"

so a poet, a *king* of beauty, is for ever a joy or a terror; a gulf of glory opening above, or an abyss of torment and mystery gaping below.

'Tis verily a fearful gift that of poetic genius; and fearful, especially, through the immortality which waits upon all its genuine inspirations, whatever be their moral purpose and tendency. Thus, a Marlowe is as immortal as a Milton—a Congreve as a Goldsmith—a Byron or Burns as a Wordsworth or James Montgomery—an Edgar Poe as a Longfellow or a Lowell. Just look at the dreadful, the unquenchable, the infernal *life* of Poe's "Lyrics and Tales." No one can read these without shuddering, without pity, and sorrow, and condemnation of the author, without a half-muttered murmur of inquiry at his Maker—"Why this awful anomaly in thy works?" And yet no one can avoid reading them, and reading them again, and hanging over their lurid and lightning-blast-

ed pages, and thinking that this wondrous being wanted only two things to have made him the master of American minds—virtue and happiness. And there steals in another thought, which deepens the melancholy and eternises the interest—what would Poe now give to have lived another life than he did, and to have devoted his inestimable powers to other works than the convulsive preparation of such terrible trifles—such *nocturna nuga*—as constitute his remains? And still more empathically, what would Swift and Byron now exchange for the liberty of suppressing their fouler and more malignant works—works which, nevertheless, a world so long as it lies in wickedness shall never willingly let die?

Alas! it is *too late*; *εργαστο*, as the Greek play has it. The shaft of genius once ejaculated can be recalled no more, be it aimed at Satan or at God. And hence in our day the peculiar propriety, nay, necessity, of prefacing or winding up our praise of poetic power by such a stern caution to its possessor as this:—"Be thou sure that thy word, whether that of an angel or a fiend, whether openly or secretly blasphemous, whether loyal or rebellious to the existence of a God and of his great laws, whether in favor of the alternative Despair or the alternative Revelation, the only two possible, shall endure with the endurance of earth, and shall remain on thy head either a halo of horror or a crown of glory."

Claiming, as we do, something of a paternal interest in Alexander Smith, we propose, in the remainder of this paper, first characterizing his peculiar powers, and secondly, adding to this estimate our most sincere and friendly counsel as to their future exercise.

It is a labor of love; for ever since the straggling, scratch-ing MS., along with its accompanying letter, reached our still study, we have loved the author of the "Life Drama;" and all the more since we met him in his quiet yet distinct, modest yet manly personality. And perhaps the opportunities of observation which have been thus afforded may qualify us for speaking with greater certainty and satisfaction, both to ourselves and others, than the majority of his critics, about the principal elements of his genius.

We may first, however, glance at some of the charges which even his friendly critics have brought against him. He has



been accused of over sensuousness. The true answer to this is to state his youth. He is only twenty-five years of age, and wrote all those parts of the poem to which objections have been made when he was two or three years younger. Every youth of genius *must* be sensuous; and if he write poetry, ought, in truth to his own nature, to express it there. Of course we distinguish between the sensuous and the sensual. Smith is never sensual; and his most glowing descriptions, no more than those in the "Song of Songs," tend to excite lascivious feelings. Female beauty is a natural object of admiration, and a young poet filled with this passionate feeling, were a mere hypocrite if he did not voice it forth in verse, and, both as an artist and as an honest man, will feel himself compelled to do so. Had Wordsworth himself written poetry at that period of his life to which he afterwards so beautifully refers in the lines—

"O happy time of youthful lovers,  
O balmy time, in which a love-knot on a lady's brow  
Seem'd fairer than the fairest star in heaven"—

it had perhaps been scarcely less richly flesh-colored than the "Life Drama." In general, however, the true poet, as he advances in his life and in his career, will become less and less sensuous in feeling and in song. Woman's form will retreat farther back in the sky of his fancy, and woman's ideal will come more prominently forward; she will "die in the flesh, to be raised in the spirit;" and this inevitable process, through which even Moore passed, and Keats was passing at his death, shall yet be realised in Alexander Smith, if he continue to live, and his critics consent to wait. If our readers will compare Shelley's conception of woman, in his juvenile novels "Zastrozzi" and the "Rosicrucian," with Beatrice Cenci, or the graceful imaginary female forms which play like creatures of the elements in the "Prometheus," he will find another striking instance of what we mean. In some cases, perhaps, the process may be reversed, and the young poet who began with the ideal may, in after life, descend to the real, and drown his early dream of spiritual love in sensuous admiration and desire. But these we think are rare, and are accounted for as much from physical as from mental causes.

Smith has been called an imitator, or even a plagiarist. We are not careful to answer in this matter, except by again referring to his age. All young poets are imitators. "Poetry," says Aristotle, "is imitation." It begins with imitation, and it continues in imitation, and with imitation it ends. The difference between the various stages only is, that in boyhood and early youth poets imitate other poets, and that in manhood they pass from the study of models which they may admire to error and extravagance, to that great original, which, without blame, excites an infinite and endless devotion. That Smith has read and admired, and learned of Keats, and Shelley, and Tennyson, and many others, is obvious; but it is obvious also that he has read his own heart still more closely, and has learned still more from the book of nature. Every page contains allusions to his favorite authors; but every page, too, contains evidences of a rich native vein. The man who preserves his idiosyncrasy amid much reading of the poets, is more to be praised than he who, in horror at plagiarism, draws a *cordon sunitaire* around himself, and refuses to cultivate acquaintance with the great classics of his age and country. A true original is often most so when he is imitating or even translating others. So Smith has marvellously improved some of the few figures he has borrowed. The objects shown are sometimes the same as in other authors, but he has cast on them the mellowing, softening, and spiritualising moonlight of his own genius.

A still more common objection is a certain monotony of figure which marks his poetry. He draws, it is said, all his imagery from the stars, the sea, the sun, and the moon. Now we think we can not only defend him in this, but deduce from it an argument in favor of the power and truth of his genius. What bad or mediocre poet could have meddled with these old objects without failure? Nothing in general so vapid as odes to the moon, or sonnets on the sea. But Smith has lifted up his daring rod to the heavens, and extracted new and rich imagination from their unfading fires. He has once more laid a poet's hand upon the ocean's mane, and the sea has known his rider, and shaken forth a stormy poetry to his touch. Besides, his circumstances have prevented him from coming in contact habitually with aught but nature's elemen-

tary forms, and he has sung only what was most familiar to his mind. What could he have told us about the

" Alps and Apennines,  
The Pyrenean and the river Po,"

whose summer excursions never, till of late, extended farther than Inversnaid or Glencoe, and to whom

" The stars were nearer than the fields ?"

Nothing worth listening to; and therefore he watches the moon circling large and queenly over the smoky tiles of the Gallowgate; or he contemplates the round red sun, shining rayless through the Glasgow morning fogs; or he sees the head of the Great Bear or the foot of Orion glimmering on him at the corner of the streets; or striking out from the city, he marks the

" Laboring fires come out against the dark,  
Where, with the night, the country seemed on flame;  
Innumerable furnaces and pits,  
And gloomy holds, in which that bright slave, Fire,  
Doth pant and toil all day and night for man,  
Throw large and angry lustres on the sky,  
And shifting lights across the long black roads."

Or, in his rare holidays, he sails to Loch Lomond, or paces the banks of Loch Lubnaig, and fancies eclipse instead of sunshine bathing the crags of Benledi, and shadowing into terror and inky darkness the placid lake. Thus has he sought to realise and to utter the poetry which he has found around him, and, verily, great has been his reward. Few as are the objects he describes, what a depth of interest he attaches to them. With what lingering gusto does he describe them. In proportion to the smallness of their number, is the strength of his love, the felicity of his descriptions, and the energy and variety of the poetic use he makes of them. It is as if he were apprehensive of immediate blindness coming to hide them from his view, and were anxious previously to daguerreotype them for ever before the eye of his soul.

In this we are reminded of Ossian; and the defence put in by Blair on behalf of the monotony of the objects of his poetry may be used with fully more force in reference to Smith. His figures, like Ossian's, are chiefly derived from the great pri-

mary forms of nature, but their application is still more various, and much less than the Highland bard does he repeat himself, not to speak of the far subtler and intenser spirit of imagination which pervades the later poet. For we fearlessly venture to assert, that no poet that ever lived has excelled Smith in the beauty and exquisite analogical perception displayed in his images from nature. We select a few on this principle, that we have not seen them quoted in any other of the reviews or notices:—

"The anguish'd earth shines on the moon—a moon."

"Now the fame that scorn'd him while he liv'd  
Waits on him like a menial."

"His part is worst that touches this base world ;  
Although the ocean's inmost heart be pure,  
Yet the salt fringe that daily licks the shore  
Is gross with sand."

"The vain young night  
Trembles o'er her own beauty in the sea."

"The soft star that in the azure east  
Trembles in pity o'er bright bleeding day."

"The hot Indies, on whose teeming plains  
The seasons four, knit in one flowery band,  
Are dancing ever."

"Oh, could I lift my heart into her sight,  
As an old mountain lifts its martyr's cairn  
Into the pure sight of the holy heavens"

"His cataract of golden curls."

"The married colors in the bow of heaven."

"The while the thoughts rose in her eyes, like stars  
Rising and setting in the blue of night"

"The earnest sea  
... ne'er can shape unto the listening hills  
The lore it gather'd in its awful age :  
The crime for which 'tis lash'd by cruel winds  
To shrieks, mad spoomings to the frightened hills."

"A gallant, curl'd like Absalom,  
Cheek'd like Apollo, with his luted voice."

"'Tis four o'clock already. See, the moon  
Has climb'd the blue steep of the eastern sky,  
And sits and tarries for the coming night,  
So let thy soul be up and ready arm'd,  
In waiting till occasion comes like night."

"The marigold was burning in the marsh,  
Like a thing dipp'd in sunset."

By the way, not one critic, so far as we know, has noticed the exquisite poem from which this last line is quoted—a poem originally entitled “The Garden and the Child,” and which alike we and the author consider the best strain in the whole “Life Drama.” Our readers will find it in page 91. Its history is curious. Mr. Smith was trudging one day to his work along the Trongate, when he saw a child “beautiful as heaven.” There was no more work for him that day. Her face haunted him; her future history rose before his fancy; and in the evening he wrote the poem (or rather it “came upon him”) in the space of two hours. Certainly it reads like inspiration. It is one gush of tender or terrible beauty. The author now says of it (p. 101):—

“I almost smile  
At the strange fancies I have girt her with—  
The garden, peacock, and the black eclipse,  
The still grave-yard among the dreary hills,  
Grey mourners round it. I wonder if she’s dead.  
She was too fair for earth.”

The child is another little Eva. We must say that we love not only little children, but all who love them. Especially we sympathise with all those who have some one dead and sainted image of a child hanging up in the chamber of their heart, as Kate Wordsworth hangs in De Quincey’s, and A. V. hangs in our own, and who daily and nightly pay their orisons to the Great God who dwelt in it for a season. We suspect that scarce one who has lived to middle age but can remember some such early sunbeam, which shone as only sunbeams in the morning can shine, and returned with its freshness and glory all untainted to the fountain whence it sprang, bearing with it in its return to heaven a whole, loving, yearning, broken, yet submissive heart. Perhaps, after all, this feeling may have prejudiced us in favor of the “Garden and the Child,” but certainly it was the perusal of it which first increased to certainty our previous notion that Mr. Smith was one of our truest poets.

It convinced us, too, that he had a heart. This, we fear, has of late been a vital deficiency in many of our most celebrated bards. The odious examples of Goethe and Byron,

the constant inculcation, by critics, of the necessity of reaching artistic merit at every expense and every hazard, and the solitary or divorced life of some of our literary men, not to speak of the withering effects of scepticism and of a modified licentiousness, have all tended to deaden or mislead, or to render morbid, the feelings of our men of genius. Neither Keats nor Moore, nor Tennyson nor Rogers, nor Henry Taylor, have given, in their poetry, any decided evidence of that warm, impulsive, childlike glow, which all men agree in calling "heart." They have proved abundantly that they are artists, and even poets, but have failed to prove that they are men.

We rejoice, however, to recognize in our younger generation of poets—in Yendys and Smith, and Bigg and Bailey—symptoms that a better order of things is at hand, and that the principle, "the Greatest of these is Love," so long acknowledged in religion, shall by and by be felt to be the law of poetry—understanding, too, by love, not a mere *liking* to all things, not a mere indifferentism, *raised on its elbow* to contemplate objects, but a warm, strong, and enacted preference for all things that are "lovely and true, and of a good report."

The great distinction between the speaker and the singer in this age, as in past ages, is, perhaps, music. Many now, as ever, possessing all other parts of the poet—genius, originality, constructive power—are doomed (sad fate!) all their lives long to the level of prose by their deficiency in ear, their want of music. Apollo's soul may be in them, but Apollo's lute they can by no means tune. Look at Walter Savage Landor! No one can doubt that he is intensely and essentially a poet, and that his prose and verse contain little bursts of glorious poetic music. But they are brief; they are broken; they are not sustained; they are perpetually intermingled with harsh and harrow-like paragraphs, and both his prose and verse conjoin in proving that he never could have elaborated any long, linked, and continuous harmony. Feeling all this, we have watched with considerable interest and care Smith's versification, trying it, however, not by any artificial standard, but solely by the ear; and our decided opinion is, that he has been destined by nature to sing rather than to speak his fine

thoughts to the world. His poetry abounds with every variety of natural music.

Take that of the ballad, in this specimen :—

"In winter, when the dismal rain  
Comes down in slanting lines,  
And Wind, that grand old harper, smote  
His thunder harp of pines.

\* \* \* \*

"When violets came and woods were green,  
And larks did skyward dart,  
A Love alit and white did sit  
Like an angel on his heart.

\* \* \* \*

"The Lady Blanche was saintly fair,  
Nor proud, but meek her look ;  
In her hazel eyes her thoughts lay clear  
As pebbles in a brook.

\* \* \* \*

"The world is old, oh ! very old ;  
The wild winds weep and rave :  
The world is old, and grey, and cold,  
Let it drop into its grave."

Or take a specimen of what we may call the Wordsworthian measure, culled from the "Garden and the Child :"—

"She sat on shaven plot of grass,  
With earnest face, and weaving  
Lilies white and freak'd pansies  
Into quaint delicious fancies ;  
Then, on a sudden, leaving  
Her floral wreath, she would upspring,  
With silver shouts and ardent eyes,  
To chase the yellow butterflies,  
Making the garden ring ;  
Then gravely pace the scented walk,  
Soothing her doll with childish talk."

\* \* \* \*

"That night the sky was heap'd with clouds ;  
Through one blue gulf profound,  
Begirt with many a cloudy crag,  
The moon came rushing like a stag,  
And one star like a bound :  
Wearily the chase I eyed,  
Wearily I saw the Dawn's  
Feet sheening o'er the dewy lawns.  
Oh God ! that I had died.  
My heart's red tendrils all were torn,  
And bleeding, on that summer morn."

Or take a specimen of rich voluptuous blank verse :—

"I will be kind when next he brings me flowers  
Pluck'd from the shining forehead of the morn,  
Ere they have oped their rich cores to the bee;  
His wild heart with a ringlet will I chain,  
And o'er him I will lean me like a heaven,  
And feed him with sweet looks and dew-soft words,  
And beauty that might make a monarch pale,  
And thrill him to the heart's core with a touch :  
Smile him to Paradise at close of eve,  
To hang upon my lips in silver dreams."

Or hear this sterner, loftier, more epical strain :—

"A grim old king,  
Whose blood leap'd madly when the trumpets bray'd,  
To joyous battle 'mid a storm of steeds,  
Won a rich kingdom on a battle-day ;  
But in the sunset he was ebbing fast,  
Ring'd by his weeping lords. His left hand held  
His white steed, to the belly plash'd with blood,  
That seem'd to mourn him with its drooping head ;  
His right his broken brand ; and in his ear  
His old victorious banners flap the winds.  
He call'd his faithful herald to his side—  
'Go! tell the dead I come.' With a proud smile,  
The warrior with a stab let out his soul,  
Which fled, and shriek'd through all the other world—  
'Ye dead! my master comes!' And there was pause  
Till the great shade should enter."

Does not this description remind you of Homer's style? How rugged yet powerful its melody! We could quote many other passages, all corroborating our statement that Smith is naturally a master of music, and needs only a careful culture to complete the mastery. Since the appearance of the "Life Drama," he published a little chant in a Glasgow newspaper, entitled "Barbara," the copy of which we have mislaid, else we would have quoted it as a final triumphant proof of his musical power, as well as of his lyrical genius. It is one of the most touching little laments in the language. But here a question of greater moment occurs—Has this young poet, in addition to his exquisite imagery, his heart, and his music, a true and deep vein of thought, and does that thought, as all deep veins of reflection should do, run into religion? What



is his theory of things? Is he a Christian, or is he a mere philosophic speculator, or poetic visionary? Now here, we think, is the vital defect of the poem, the one thing which prevents us applying to it the epithet "great." Mr. Smith is, we believe, no infidel; and his poetry breathes, at times, an earnest spirit: but his views on such subjects are extremely vague and unformed. He does not seem sufficiently impressed with the conviction that no poem ever has deserved the name of "great" when not impregnated with religion, and when not rising into worship. His creed seems too much that of Keats—

"Beauty is truth—truth beauty."

We repeat that he should look back to the past, and think what are the poems which have come down to us from it most deeply stamped with the approbation of mankind, and which appear most likely to see and glorify the ages of the future. Are they not those which have been penetrated and inspired by moral purpose, and warmed by religious feeling? We speak not of sectarian song, nor of the common generation of hymns and hymn writers, but we point to Dante's "Divina Comedia," to all Milton's Poems, to Spenser's "Faerie Queen," to Herbert's "Temple," to Young's "Night Thoughts," to Thomson's "Seasons," to some of the better strains of Pope and Johnson, to Cowper, to Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge. These, and not Keats, or Shelley, or Tennyson, or Byron, are our real kings of melody; they are our great, clear, healthy standards of song; they are all alike free from morbid weakness, moral pollution, and doubtful speculation; and the poet who would not merely shine the meteor of a moment, the stare of fools, and the temporary pet of the public, but would aspire to send his name down, in thunder and in music, through the echoing aisles of the future, and become a benevolent and beloved potentate over distant ages, and millions yet unborn, must tread in their footsteps, and seek after the hallowed sources of their inspiration.

This leads us, in the last place, to give our young poet a few sincere and friendly counsels. When he appeared first, he was, we know, and complained that he was, "deluged with advice." That deluge has now subsided, and we would desire,

in its subsidence, to try to collect the essence of the moral it has left, and to impress it on his serious attention.

We will not reiterate to him the commonplaces he must have heard, *ad nauseam*, about bearing his honors meekly, and not being dazzled and spoiled with success, &c. That success has, indeed, been unparalleled for at least thirty years. The last case at all in point was Pollok's "Course of Time," but this, if our readers will remember, did not become popular till after its author's premature death had surrounded, as it were, all its pages with a black border, and made it to be read as men read the record of the funeral of a king. But Smith "arose one morning, and found himself famous." That this sudden glare of fame on a head so young, were it not as strong as it is young, might have produced injurious effects, was a matter of some probability. But that danger, we think, is now past, and there are other dangers more to be dreaded, which may be on their way.

Mr. Smith should neither, on the one hand, rest under his laurels, nor, on the other, be too eager to snatch at more. Let him deeply ponder on the subject of his second poem, and let him carefully elaborate its execution. Let him mercilessly shear away all those small mannerisms of style of which he has been accused. Let him burn his Tennyson and his Keats; he has read them now long enough, and further perusal were not profitable. He has lately had the opportunity of extending his sphere of survey; he has seen the finest scenery in Scotland and South Britain; he has mingled with much of its most distinguished literary society, and is now the secretary to an illustrious university, and in the metropolis of his native land. Let him select a topic for his new poem which will permit him to avail himself of these new advantages, and let him pour into it every drop of the new blood and every ray of the new light he has recently acquired. We rejoice to learn that he is no *improvisatore* in composition; that he loves to write slowly; that he enjoys the labor of the file; that almost every line in his "Life Drama" was written several times—rejoice in this, because it assures us that his next work shall be no hasty effusion, hatched up by the heat of success, but that it shall be a calm and determined trial of his general and artistic strength. His styles and manners are, as

our extracts have proved, manifold, and he might attain mastery in all. But we would earnestly ask him to give us more of that stern Homeric grandeur we find in his picture, quoted above, of the dying king :—

“ That strain I heard was of a higher mood.”

We close this “deluge of advice,” if he will call it so, by other three distinct counsels :—First, let him advance to nobler models than those he seems hitherto, almost exclusively, to have studied. We have been told that he has commenced a careful reading of Goethe, which may be of considerable benefit to him in the art of expression, as Goethe’s style is generally supposed to be nearly faultless. But let him not rest there, since there are far loftier and far safer ridges on the Parnassian hill. We name, as the models to which he ought to give his days and his nights, Homer, Dante, Milton, Shakspeare’s sterner tragedies, and, above all, the poetry of the Bible. That he has read all these, we doubt not. What we wish him to do, is to study them ; to roll their raptures, and to catch their fire ; to make them his song in the house of his pilgrimage ; and at their reverend and time-honored altars not only to kindle the fire of his own genius, but to consume, as chaff, whatever puerilities may have hitherto contributed to lessen the brightness of the flame.

Secondly, he must become less sensuous. In other words, he must put off the youth, and put on the man. He must think and sing less about “ringlets,” and “waists,” and “passion-panting breasts,” &c., &c. All such things we pardon in him now, but shall be less disposed to forgive after a few years have passed over his head. A boy Anacreon may be borne with, but a middle-aged or old Anacreon is a nuisance, especially when he might have been something far higher. For the sake of poetry, let him proceed to veil the statue of the Venus, and to uncover those of the Apollo, the Mars, and the Jupiter.

Our last counsel is the most momentous. He has himself painted in glowing colors his ideal of the poet as one who shall “consecrate poetry to God, and to its own high uses.” Let him proceed with stern and firm step to fill up his own ideal, and accomplish his own prophecy. Let him be the

great sublime he draws. Of this he may be certain, that the poet of the coming time must be a believer in the future as well as a worshipper of the past. He may not be a sectarian, but he must be a Christian. We do not want him to write religious poetry in the style of Watts or Montgomery, or any one else; but we want him to devote his fine powers more than he has hitherto done to the promulgation of high spiritual truth; if not, we foresee that one or two of his competitors in the poetic race, whom he has meantime outstripped, may overtake him, and come into the goal amid a deeper gush of applause and of thankfulness, from that large class who now look upon poetry as a serious thing, and are disposed to consult it as a subordinate oracle of the Most High. But we will not anticipate, far less despair. The vaticination of our hearts tells us that, apart altogether from comparative awards and successes, there are noble fields before Alexander Smith, and that his own words shall not fail of fulfilment.

"I will go forth 'mong men, not mail'd in scorn,  
But in the armor of a pure intent;  
Great duties are before me, and great songs.  
And, whether crown'd or crownless, when I fall,  
It matters not, so as God's work is done.  
I've learned to prize the quiet light'ning deed,  
Not the applauding thunder at its heels,  
Which men call Fame."

### NO. III.—J. STANYAN BIGG.\*

THERE are, every tyro in criticism knows, three great schools or varieties in Poetry—the objective, the subjective, and the combination of the two. The best specimens of the first class are to be found in Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," in Burns's poems, and in Scott's rhymed romances; of the second, in the poetry of Lucretius, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and some of the Germans; and of the combination of the two, in Shakspeare, Milton, Schiller, and Byron. Of late, almost

\* "Night and the Soul:" a Dramatic Poem.

all our poets of much mark have betaken themselves to the subjective. We propose, ere coming to Mr. Bigg, first, inquiring into the causes of this; and, secondly, urging our young poets, by a few arguments, to intermix a larger amount of the objective with their poetry.

One cause of the propensity of our rising race of poets to the subjective, has undoubtedly been the force of example. The poets who are at present acting with most power on the young mind of the age, are intensely subjective, and some of them to the brink of morbidity. The influence wielded over the lovers of poetry by Homer, Scott, or Burns, is slender, compared to that which Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and the rest of the bardic brotherhood—the sons of Mist by Thunder—are exerting. The writings of the former are devoured like new novels, and then thrown aside. The writings of the latter are tasted slowly, and in drops—are studied—are carried into solitude—are read by the sides of lonely rivers, or on silent mountain tops, and ultimately surround the young aspirants with an atmosphere which goes with them where they go, rests with them where they rest, and hovers over their pens when they write. To the charm of these poets, it adds mightily that they are said to be, and are, more or less heterodox in their creeds. This gives a peculiar gusto to their works, the reading of which becomes a sweet and secret sin, smacking of the taste of the “stolen waters” and the “pleasant bread.” Thus are two luxuries—that of the indulgence of daring thought, and something resembling contraband desire—united in the perusal of our later subjective poets.

Secondly, we live in a period of deep thoughtfulness, and great intellectual doubt. Never were there so many thinking. Never was thought so much at sea. Never were there so many “searchings of heart.” Our blessed Lord mentions, as one of the most striking signs of his second advent—“perplexity.” “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with *perplexity*—the sea and the waves roaring!” This sign is around us, even at the doors. The political and the moral, the intellectual and the religious worlds, are all equally perplexed and in darkness. It is a midnight, moaning, weltering

ocean, on which we are all embarked, and the day-star has not yet risen. Our poetical spirits are sharing, to a very large extent, in this perplexity; and this has led to incessant introspective views and pensive contemplations. After Byron, there rose a short-lived race of rhymsters, who pretended to scepticism and gloom, but whose real object was to produce a stimulating effect upon the minds of their readers; and who, like quack doctors, distributed drugs to others, of which they themselves never tasted a drop. It is very different now. A real yearning uncertainty and thirst after more light, are now heard crying, if not shrieking, in many of our poets. All recent poems of mark, such as the "Life Drama," "Balder," "Festus," and "Night and the Soul," are more or less filled with those thoughts that wander through eternity; those beatings of strong souls against the bars of their earthly prison-house; those profound questions uplifted to heaven—"Whence evil? What the nature of man, and what his future destiny? What, who, and where is God?" True poets must sympathise with the tendency of their times, and as that at present, is transitional, uncertain, and uneasy, their poetry must partake, in some measure, of that uncertainty and that unrest.

In connection with this, is the prevalent study of the transcendental philosophy by our poets. It was long imagined that poetry and philosophy were incompatible—that no poet could be a philosopher, and that no philosopher could be a poet. What God had often joined man put asunder. It has, however, been for some time surmised that critics were in this wrong. The fact that Milton was thoroughly conversant with the philosophies of his day, and the example set by the German poets, and by the Lakers, who combined ardent poetic enthusiasm with diligent and deep study of metaphysics, have rectified opinion on this point, and sent our young poets to their Kants, their Fichtes, and their Hamiltons, as well as to their Shakspeares and their Goethes. From these and other causes, it has come about, that at an age when the gifted youth of the past were singing of their Helens or their Marys—apostrophising their spaniels and robin-redbreasts, or describing the outward forms of sky and earth around their native village, their successors in the present are singing of the mysterious relations of nature to the human soul; are galloping

their Pegasus from galaxy to galaxy; and are now entering the heaven of heavens, and now listening to the sound of the surge of penal fire, breaking on the "murk and haggard rocks" of that "Other Place."

Now, we are far from seeking to deny that this is, *on the whole*, what it should be, as well as what, inevitably, it must have been. It were as vain altogether to condemn, as at all to try to resist, the stream of an age-tendency. Nay, this state of things has some advantages, and teems with some promise. It proves that the minds of men are becoming more serious and thoughtful, when even our youths of genius are less poets than preachers. It shows that we are living in a more earnest period. It proves progress, since our very youth have passed points where the mature manhood of the past thought it prudent and necessary to halt. It suggests hope, that in a future age there may be still higher, quicker, and more certain and solid advancement. But, looking at the matter on the other side, the exclusively subjective cast of much of our best poetry has produced certain evils. In the first place, it has tended to overcast the renown of our great objective poets, particularly among the young. Homer, Scott, Campbell, and Burns, are still, indeed, popular, but not so much, we think, as they were, and are read rather for their mere interest, than for their artistic and poetic excellence. Relished by many they still are, as sweet morsels; but seldom, if at all, studied as *models*. Secondly, it, on the other hand, excludes our really good poets of the subjective school from many circles of readers, who, seeking for some objective interest in poems, and finding little or none, are tempted to close them in weariness, or fling them away in disgust. Thomson, Cowper, Byron, as well as Shakspeare and Milton, addressed themselves to all classes of minds, except the very lowest, and succeeded in fascinating all. Browning, and many besides, speak only to the higher minds, and verily they have their reward; their works are pronounced unintelligible and uninteresting by the majority of readers, and, while loudly praised, are little read. How different it had been, if these gifted men had wreathed their marvellous profusion of thought and imagery round some striking story, or made it subservient to some well-constructed plot! The "Paradise Lost" and the "Pilgrim's

Progress" are devoured by millions for their fable, who are altogether incapable of understanding their interior meaning, or perceiving their more recondite beauties. "Prometheus Unbound," and "Paracelsus," are read with pleasure by the more enthusiastic, but are *caviare*, not only to the general reader, but to many thousands who love poetry with a passion. Tennyson, on the other hand, with all his subtlety and refinement, seldom forgets to throw in such touches of nature, and little fragments of narrative, as secure a kindly reception for his poems, at once with the severest of critics and the least astute of schoolboys. Why should poets be read only by poets, or by philosophical critics? We think that every good poem should be constructed on the same model with a good sermon, in which the preacher, if a sensible man, takes care that there shall be at once milk for babes and strong meat for them that are of full age; or upon the model of that blessed book, the Bible, which contains often in the same chapter the grandest poetry and the simplest pathos; here, "words unutterable," which seem to have dropped from the very lips of the heavenly oracle, and there, little sentences, which appear made for the mouths of babes and sucklings; here, "deeps where an elephant may swim; and there, shallows where a lamb may wade!"

Thirdly, this systematic subjectivism is almost certain to produce systematic obscurity and methodical mysticism. If an original writer sit down to compose poetry, either without the thought of any audience, or with only that of a few superior minds in view, he almost inevitably falls into peculiarities of thought and idiosyncrasies of language, which suit only an esoteric class of readers, and will often baffle even them. If a poet only seek to "move himself," leaving it, as beneath him, to the "orator," to "move others," the consequence will be fatal, not only to his popularity, but to his genuine power. He will move nobody but himself. Look again to Browning's poetry: a wonderful thing it is, in many points and parts; but, as a whole, it is a book of puzzles—a vast enigma—a tissue of hopeless obscurity in thought, and of perplexed, barbarous, affected jargon in language. The same is true with much of Emerson's volume of poems. It is easy for these authors to accuse the reader of being dull in comprehension.



The reader thinks he has a greater right to retort the charge of dulness upon the author. Where fire is, it shines; where a star is, it beams: the differentia of light is to be seen. But the density of much of our modern poetry is "dark as was Chaos, ere the infant Sun was rolled together, or had tried his beams across the gulf profound." It is amusing to watch the foolish faces put on by the admirers of this kind of rhymed riddles or blank-verse conundrums, when even they are unable to make out the meaning of some portentous passage, through which not a ray of light has been permitted to shine, and from which grammar and sense have been alike divorced; and to hear their mumbled apologies to the effect, "Depend on it, there are sunbeams in this cucumber, provided we were able to extract them!"

Another evil is the increase of a false, pretentious, and pseudo-philosophic style of criticism, which, by being constantly exercised upon mystic or super-subtle poetry, becomes altogether incapable of appreciating any other, and often finds subjective meanings, where the objective alone was intended by the poet. The great master of this art abroad is Ulrici, whose "Midsummer Night's Dream" of Shakspeare passes with many for a piece of profound and unmatched analysis. Specimens of the class are rife at home, and we deplore the increase amongst us of a style of criticism, which seeks to illustrate the *ignotum* by the *ignotius*, as though midnight could add illumination to mist.

What, then, is it asked, do we propose that our poets should do? Should they, as Professor Blackie in his late Stirling speech seems to think, abandon subjective song altogether; and burning their Wordsworth and Shelley, betake themselves to ballad-poetry, Homer, Scott, and Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome?" By no means. This is not a legitimate conclusion from what we have now said. There remains a more excellent way. The third and best style, combining the direct dealing, the definite plan, and the clear purpose, the interest and the simpler style of objective poetry, with the depth, the thoughtfulness, the catholicity, and the universal references of subjective, should be attempted by our rising bards. They need not be at a loss either for models or subjects. All Shakspeare may become their exemplar. Let them look especially

to his "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Timon," and notice how, in these masterpieces of his genius, he has united the subtlest reflection and loftiest imagination, to the liveliest interest and the warmest human feeling. How clear he is, too, amid all his depth; how direct amid all his passion; and how masculine amid all his subtlety, not to speak of the infinite variety produced by his interchange of the gay with the grave—of the comic with the tragic elements. Or let them study not Shelley's "Prometheus," but his "Cenci," and take not the monstrosity of the story, but the manhood of the style, for their model. Or let them read "Wallenstein," and the other great dramas of Schiller. Or let them consult Byron himself, and see how, in "Manfred," in "Sardanapalus," and in "Cain," he has combined the deepest thought *he* was capable of, and admirable artistic management of style and character, with vividness of individual portraiture, and intensity of interest. As to subjects, they are inexhaustible, as long as there are so many passages and characters in history waiting for treatment; panting, shall we say, for that incarnation which genius only can give. We point at present to one,—a gigantic one—to Danton. Which of our young poets, our Smiths, Masseys, Biggs, and Yendyses, shall win a crown of immortal fame, by writing a rugged historical drama, after the old "Julius Cæsar" or "Richard the Third" fashion, developing the character and casting the proper glare of grandeur on the death of that wild wondrous Titan of the French Revolution? "Danton," said Scott, long ago, "is a subject fit for the treatment of Shakspeare or Schiller."

After all the deductions and exceptions implied in the foregoing remarks, we cannot but express our delight at the fine flush of genuine poetry which the last few years have witnessed alike in England, Ireland, and Scotland. In a MS. volume we find some sentences written by us in the year 1835, when we were newly of age, which we transcribe, because they express anticipations which have been of late signally fulfilled. "It is objected, 'People will not now-a-days read poetry.' True, they will not read what is *called* poetry. They will not read tenth-rate imitations of Byron. They will not read nursery themes for which a schoolboy would be flogged. They will not read respectable commonplace. They

will not read even the study-sweepings of reputed men, who imagine, in their complacency, that the universe is agape for the rinsings of their genius. But neither will people, if they can help it, eat raw turnips, or drink ditch water, nor have willingly done so, from the flood downwards, to our knowledge. But people would read real poetry, were it given them. Indeed, an outcry about the decline of poetry is sure, sooner or later, to provoke a re-action. It will, indeed, encourage an enterprising spirit. 'The field,' he will say, 'lies clear, or is peopled only by Lilliputians, supplicating to be spit upon rather than neglected. Why should not I enter on it?' The age is now awake. The slightest symptoms of original power are now recognised. *And we often figure to ourselves the rapture with which a great poet, writing in the spirit of his age, would now be welcomed by an age whose manuals are already Wordsworth and Goethe.*"

No mean place among our rising poets must be allowed to J. Stanyan Bigg, who has once more challenged interest for the lake country of Cumberland, on account of the poetic genius it still inspires and fosters. He was born, we believe, at least he now resides, in Ulverston. He has, we understand, published some time ago, a juvenile volume of poems, but this we have not seen. Part of his present work appeared, like Smith's "Life Drama," piecemeal in the "Critic"—that admirable paper, which is now, both in character and circulation, at the very top of the literary journals in the metropolis; and the Groombridges have now placed the whole before us, in the shape of this handsome, portable, and well-printed volume.

Mr. Bigg—although classable in strict logic and method with the school of Bailey, and although bearing certain marked resemblances to Alexander Smith—is yet distinctively original; being less mystical than Festus, less sensuous than Smith—more humane and more Christian, we think, than either. He shines not so much in outstanding passages of intense brilliance, or in single thoughts of great depth, as in a certain rich pervasive spirit of poetry, in which (to use the word applied to it by a generous rival-bard) all his verses are "soaked." His poetry has not yet gathered into firm sunlike shape, but rather resembles what Dr. Whewell in his "Plu-

reality of Worlds" supposes many of the stars still to be—fiery matter unconsolidated, and having hitherto cast off no worlds. Yet the light and the fire are genuine, and may be expected, in due time, to bring forth results both useful and splendid. We seem to perceive the following peculiarities, besides, in Mr. Bigg's poetry:—His imagery is remarkable for its boldness and variety. He has exhibited an equal appreciation of the beautiful and the sublime. He has that noble rush of thought and language which is so characteristic of genuine inspiration. He has a keen perception of the analogies subsisting between nature and the mind of man. And his hope in the destiny of humanity is founded on Christian grounds. These are his main merits. We shall, ere we have done, notice what seem his defects.

First, Mr. Bigg's imagery is uncommonly varied and bold. None of his figures are so striking, or so highly wrought, as some in the "Life Drama," but there is a greater abundance and variety of them. The nature of his theme ("Night") leads him to select many from the scenery of that season—its stars, its wailing winds, the many mysterious sights and sounds which haunt its solitudes. But, besides these, he gathers analogies from a thousand other regions, and skirts his Night with a bright border of Daylight imagery. Here, for instance, are some sweet and soothing figures:—

"Bless them, and bless the world. Oh may it rest  
In peace upon thy bosom, like a ship  
On the unrippled silver of the sea,  
Or like a green tree in the circling blue  
Of the bright joyousness of summer-morn."

Here, again, is a rich Arabian-Night kind of fancy:—

"Thou speakest in soul-pictures, yet I see  
Thy meaning rising through them, free and simple  
As a young princeling from the grand state-bed,  
Where his white limbs have been enswathed all night  
In gold and velvets."

As a proof of his variety, we give a passage containing, in the space of a few lines, three figures, all good, and all so diverse from each other:—

"Oh! 'twere as if a dank dishevell'd night  
Should rush up, madly hunted by the winds,

All black as Erebus, upon the steps  
 Of a great laughing oriental day.  
 I should be wretched as a cold lone house,  
*Standing a mark upon a northern moor,*  
 Eaves-deep in snow, surrounded by black pools,  
*Pelted by winter, ever anger-pale,*  
 To lose you, having tasted of such bliss,  
 Such sweet companionship, such holy joy,  
 'Twere as if earth should be flung back again,  
 All singing as she is, and crown'd with flowers,  
 Into the reeking cycles of her past :  
 Instead of valleys, sedge swamps, and fens,  
 With grim, unwieldy reptiles trailing through,  
 And in the place of singing, bellowings,  
 And the wild roar of monsters on the hills."

That "cold lone house," what a picture! It is worthy of Crabbe; only Mr. Bigg gives it a personification more powerful than was competent to that poet, and you feel for it as if it were a forlorn human being. How often we have regarded houses in the country with similar emotions. One seemed sheltering itself, and consciously cowering, amid the woods which screened it from the northern blast. Another seemed shivering on a bare and bald exposure. A third, of mean aspect, but set on a hill, seemed ashamed of its exalted beggary, and far-seen nakedness, and striving for ever in vain to be hid. A fourth stood up with the majesty of an Atlas, in castellated dignity beneath earth and heaven, meeting the scene and the sun like an equal. A fifth seemed melancholy amid its eternal moors. And a sixth, a ruin, glared through the dull eyes of its broken windows and dilapidated loopholes, in rage and defiance, to a landscape over which it had once looked abroad in pride, protection, and love.

Secondly, Mr. Bigg seems equally attracted by, although not equally successful in, the beautiful and the sublime. Specimens of the sublime are found in his poetry; one of the finest, we think, is the following:—

"Were all nature void, one human thought,  
 Self-utter'd and evolved in act, left like  
 A white bone on the brink of the abyss,  
 As the sole relic of what once had been;  
 Thou, who perceivest at a glance the all  
 In one, who scannest all relationships,  
 In whom all issues meet concentrative—  
 Couldst from this puny fragment of thy works

Recall, and re-arrange, and re-construct  
 The mighty mammoth-skeleton of things,  
 And fold it once more in its spotted skin,  
 And bid the Bright Beast live."

Another is this. Speaking of the pre-Adamite earth, he says—

"She lay desolate and dumb as they,  
 Save when volcanoes lifted up their voice—  
 Olden Isaiahs in the wilderness—  
 And told unto the incredulous wastes wild tales  
 Of the great after-time—the age of flowers,  
 Of songs and blossoms, MAN, and grassy graves."

But it is in the region of the beautiful that our poet is most at home. He has watered his muse at Grasmere Springs, and at the placid Lake of Windermere, rather than at the turbid waves of "grey Loch Skene," the still, slumbering, inky depths of Loch Avon and Loch Lea, or the streams of the Cona, moaning and foaming amid the rocks and gloomy precipices of Glencoe. We give two specimens of the many beautiful and pathetic strains with which this volume abounds. The following occurs at page 33 :—

"A fair young girl,  
 To whom one keen wo, like the scythe of Death,  
 Had sever'd at a stroke the ties of earth—  
 The tender trammelage of love and hope—  
 And not released the spirit from its clay,  
 But left it bleeding out at every pore,  
 Clinging with torn hands to its prison-bars,  
 And gasping out towards the light, in vain.  
 For she had loved and been deserted; and  
 All her heart's wealth was now return'd to her  
 Base metal, and not current coin. Her love,  
 Which went forth from her bright and beautiful,  
 Came back a ghastly corpse, to turn her heart  
 Into a bier, and chill it with its weight  
 Of passive wo for ever. But the shock  
 Had turn'd the poles of being, and henceforth  
*In circles ever narrowing, her soul*  
*Went wheeling like a stricken world round heaven.*

EDITH.

Eyes she had, in whose dark lustre  
 Slumber'd wild and mystic beams;  
 A brow of polish'd marble—  
 Pale abode of gorgeous dreams—

Dreams that caught the hues and splendours  
Which the radiant future shows,  
For the past was nought but anguish,  
And a sepulchre of woes;  
Therefore from its scenes and sorrows  
All her heart and soul were riven,  
And her thoughts kept ever wandering  
With the angels up to heaven.

When they told her of the pleasures  
Which the future had in store,  
When her sorrows would have faded,  
And her anguish would be o'er;  
Told her of her wealth and beauty,  
And the triumphs in her train;  
Told her of the many others  
Who would sigh for her again:  
She but caught one-half their meaning,  
While the rest afar was driven:  
'Yes,' she murmur'd 'they are happy—  
They, I mean, who dwell in heaven!'

When they wish'd once more to see her  
Mingling with the bright and fair;  
When they told her of the splendor  
And the rank that would be there;  
Told her that amid the glitter  
Of that brilliant living sea,  
There were none so sought and sigled for,  
None so beautiful as she;  
Still she heeded not the flattery,  
Heard but half the utterance given:  
'Yes,' she answer'd, 'there are bright ones,  
Many, too, I know—in heaven!'

When they spoke of sunlit glories,  
Summer days, and moonlit hours;  
Told her of the spreading woodland,  
With its treasury of flowers;  
Clustering fruits, and vales, and mountains,  
Flower-banks mirror'd in clear springs,  
Winds whose music ever mingled  
With the hum of glancing wings—  
Scenes of earthly bliss and beauty  
Far from all her thoughts were driven,  
And she fancied that they told her  
Of the happiness of heaven.

For one master-pang had broken  
The sweet spell of her young life;  
And henceforth its calm and sunshine  
Were as tasteless as its strife;  
Henceforth all its gloom and grandeur,  
All the music of its streams,

---

All its thousand pealing voices,  
 Spoke the language of her dreams;  
 Dreams that wander'd on, like orphans  
 From all earthly solace driven,  
 Searching for their great Protector,  
 And the palace-gates of heaven."

Thirdly, Mr. Bigg exhibits that noble rushing motion of thought and language which testifies so strongly to a genuine inspiration, in which words seem to pursue each other, like wheels in a series of chariots, with irresistible force and impetuous velocity. Nowhere out of "Festus" do we find passages which heave and hurry along with a more genuine afflatus, than in many of Mr. Bigg's pages. Take two long passages, both of which are "instinct with spirit." The first will be found at page 21 :—

"The night is lovely, and I love her with  
 A passionate devotion, for she stirs  
 Feelings too deep for utterance within me.  
 She thrills me with an influence and a power,  
 A sadden'd kind of joy I cannot name,  
 So that I meet her brightest smile with tears.  
 She seemeth like a prophetess, too wise,  
 Knowing, ah! all too much for happiness;  
 As though she had tried all things, and had found  
 All vain and wanting, and was thenceforth steep'd  
 Up to the very dark, tear-lidded eyes  
 In a mysterious gloom, a holy calm!  
 Doth she not look now just as if she knew  
 All that hath been, and all that is to come?  
 With one of her all-prescient glances turn'd  
 Towards those kindred depths which slept for aye—  
 The sable robe which God threw round himself,  
 And where, pavilion'd in glooms, he dwelt  
 In brooding night for ages, perfecting  
 The glorious dream of past eternities,  
 The fabric of creation, running adown  
 The long time-avenues, and gazing out  
 Into those blanks which slept before time was;  
 And with another searching glance, turn'd up  
 Towards unknown futurities—the book  
 Of unborn wonders—till she hath perused  
 The chapter of its doom; and with an eye  
 Made vague by the dim vastness of its vision,  
 Watching unmoved the fall of burning worlds,  
 Rolling along the steep sides of the Infinite,  
 All ripe, like apples dropping from their stems;  
 Till the wide fields of space, like orchards stripp'd,  
 Have yielded up their treasures to the garner,



And the last star hath fallen from the crown  
 Of the high heavens into utter night,  
 Like a bright moment swallow'd up and lost  
 In hours of after-anguish ; and all things  
 Are as they were in the beginning, ere  
 The mighty pageant trail'd its golden skirts  
 Along the glittering pathway of its God,  
 Save that the spacious halls of heaven are fill'd  
 With countless multitudes of finite souls,  
 With germ-like infinite capacities,  
 As if to prove all had not been a dream.  
 'Tis this that Night seems always thinking of ;  
 Linking the void past to the future void,  
 And typifying present times in stars,  
 To show that all is not quite issueless,  
 But that the blanks have yielded starlike ones  
 To cluster round the sapphire throne of God  
 In bliss forever and for evermore !"

The second, still finer, meets us at page 39 :—

" O thought ! what art thou but a fluttering leaf  
 Shed from the garden of Eternity ?  
 The robe in which the soul invests itself  
 To join the countless myriads of the skies—  
 The very air they breathe in heaven—the gleam  
 That lights it up, and makes it what it is—  
 The light that glitters on its pinnacles—  
 The luscious bloom that flushes o'er its fruits—  
 The odour of its flowers, and very soul  
 Of all the music of its million harps—  
 The dancing glory of its angels' eyes—  
 The brightness of its crowns, and starlike glow  
 Of its bright thrones—the centre of its bliss,  
 For ever radiating like a sun—  
 The spirit thrill that pulses through its halls,  
 Like sudden music vibrating through air—  
 The splendor playing on its downy wings—  
 The lustre of its sceptres, and the breeze  
 Which shakes its golden harvests into light—  
 The diamond apex of the Infinite—  
 A ray of the great halo round God's head—  
 The consummation and the source of all,  
 In which all cluster, and all constellate,  
 Grouping like glories round the purple west  
 When the great sun is low. For what are stars  
 But God's thoughts indurate—the burning words  
 That roll'd forth blazing from his mighty lips,  
 When he spake to the breathless infinite,  
 And shook the wondrous sleeper from her dream ?  
 Thus God's thoughts ever call unto man's soul  
 To rouse itself, and let its thoughts shake off  
 The torpor from their wings, and soar and sing

Up in the sunny azure of the heavens ;  
 And when at length one rises from its rest,  
 Like the mail'd Barbarossa from his trance,  
 He smiles upon it in whatever garb  
 It is array'd :—whether it stretches up  
 In grand cathedral spires, whose gilded vanes,  
 Like glorious earth-tongues, lap the light of heaven,  
 Or rounds itself into the perfect form  
 Of marble heroes looking a reproof  
 On their creators for not gifting them  
 With one spark of that element divine  
 Whose words they are ; or points itself like light  
 Upon the retina, in breathing hues  
 And groups of loveliness on speaking canvas ;  
 Or wreaths itself in fourfold harmony,  
 Making the soul a sky of rainbows ; or  
 Sweeping vast circuits, ever stretching out,  
 Broad-arm'd, and all-embracing theories ;  
 Or harvesting its brightness focal-wise,  
 All centring in the poet's gem-like words,  
 Fresh as the odours of young flowers, and bright  
 As new stars trembling in the hand of God.  
 In all its grand disguises he beholds  
 And blesses his fair child.

\* \* \* \* \*

One human thought, invested in an act,  
 Lays bare the heart of all humanity,  
 And holds up, globule-like, in miniature  
 All that the soul of man hath yet achieved,  
 Its *Paradises Lost*, its glorious *Iliads*,  
 Its *Hamlets* and *Othellos*, and its dreams  
 Rising in towering *Pyramids* and *Fanes*,  
 To show that earth hath raptures heavenward ;  
 And like the touch'd lips of a hoary saint,  
 Utter dim prophesies of after-worlds,  
 Making sweet music to the ear of God,  
 Like *Memnon's* statue thrilling at the sun ;—  
 And as the New Year opening into life  
 Is all-related to the ages, so  
 Are man's works unto thine, Almighty God ;  
 And as the ages to eternity,  
 So are *all* works to thee, Great Source of all !"

Fourthly, the author of "Night and the Soul" has a quick perception of those real, but mysterious analogies, which bind mind and nature together. The whole poem is indeed an attempt to show the thousand points in which Night, in its brightness and blackness, its terror and its joy, its clouds and its stars, its calm and its storm, comes in contact with human hopes, fears, aspirations, doubts, faults, and destinies. For example, he says—

"The solemn Night comes hooded, like a nun  
 From her dark cell, while all the laughing stars  
 Mock the black weeds of the fair anchorite.  
 Sorrow is but the sham and slave of joy ;  
 And this sweet sadness that thou wottest of  
 Is but the dusky dress in which our bliss,  
 Like a child sporting with the weeds of wo,  
 Chooses a moment to enrobe itself."

Two beautiful separate strains will show still better what we mean. One we find at page 113 :—

"Thou pleadest, love, and all things plead ;  
 For what is life but endless needing ?  
 All worlds have wants beyond themselves,  
 And live by ceaseless pleading.

The earth yearns towards the sun for light ;  
 The stars all tremble towards each other ;  
 And every moon that shines to-night  
 Hangs trembling on an elder brother.

Flowers plead for grace to live ; and bees  
 Plead for the tinted domes of flowers ;  
 Streams rush into the big-soul'd seas ;  
 The seas yearn for the golden hours.

The moon pleads for her preacher, Night ;  
 Old ocean pleadeth for the moon ;  
 Noon flies into the shades for rest ;  
 The shades seek out the noon.

Life is an everlasting seeking ;  
 Souls seek, and pant, and plead for truth ;  
 Youth hangeth on the skirts of age ;  
 Age yearneth still towards youth.

And thus all cling unto each other ;  
 For nought from all things else is riven ;  
 Heaven bendeth o'er the prostrate earth ;  
 Earth spreads her arms towards heaven.

So do thou bend above me, love,  
 And I will bless thee from afar ;  
 Thou shalt be heaven, and I the sea  
 That bosometh the star."

The other occurs at page 117 and is a powerful collection of gloomy images :—

"I stand beside thy lonely grave, my love,  
 The wet lands stretch below me like a bog ;

Darkness comes showering down upon me fast ;  
 The wind is whining like a houseless dog ;—  
 The cold, cold wind is whining round thy grave,  
 It comes up wet and dripping from the fen ;  
*The tawny twilight creeps into the dark,*  
*Like a dun, angry lion to his den.*

There is a forlorn moaning in the air—  
 A sobbing round the spot where thou art sleeping ;  
 There is a dull glare in the wintry sky,  
 As though the eye of heaven were red with weeping.  
 Sharp gusts of tears come raining from the clouds,  
 The ancient church looks desolate and wild ;  
 There is a deep, cold shiver in the earth,  
 As though the great world hunger'd for her child.

The very trees fling their gaunt arms on high,  
 Calling for Summer to come back again ;  
 Earth cries that Heaven has quite deserted her ;  
 Heaven answers but in showers of drizzling rain.  
 The rain comes plashing on my pallid face ;  
 Night, like a witch, is squatting on the ground ;  
 The storm is rising, and its howling wail  
 Goes baying round her, like a hungry hound.

The clouds, like grim, black faces, come and go,  
 One tall tree stretches up against the sky ;  
 It lets the rain through, like a trembling hand  
 Pressing thin fingers on a watery eye.  
 The moon came, but shrank back, like a young girl  
 Who has burst in upon funereal sadness ;  
 One star came—Cleopatra-like, the Night  
 Swallow'd this one pearl in a fit of madness,  
 And here I stand, the weltering heaven above,  
 Beside thy lonely grave, my lost, my buried love !"

Fifthly, this poet deduces a grand Christian moral from his story and whole poem. Alexis, his hero, after outliving many difficulties, trials, and doubts, comes to a Christian conclusion, in which he expresses the following magnificent passage (page 155) :—

"The heart is a dumb angel to the soul  
 Till Christ pass by, and touch its bud-like lips.  
 Not unto thee, bold spirit on the wing,  
 Does the bright form of Truth reveal itself ;  
 Soar as thou wilt, the heavens are still above,  
 And to thy questionings no answer comes—  
 Only the mocking of the dumb, sad stars.  
 Awhile thy search may promise thee success,  
 And now and then wild lights may play above,

Which, with exultant joy, thou takest for  
The gleaming portals of the home of Truth—  
'Twas but a mirage where thou saw'st thyself,  
And not the image of the passing God!

Oh, with what joy we all set out for truth—  
Newer Crusaders for the Holy Land—  
Till one by one our guides and comrades fall,  
And then some starry night, some cold bleak night,  
We find we are alone upon the sands,  
Far from all human aids and sympathies,  
While the black tide comes roaring up the waste.

The highest truths lie nearest to the heart ;  
No soarings of the soul can find out God.  
I saw a bee who woke one summer night,  
And taking the white stars for flowers, went up  
Buzzing and booming in the hungry blue ;  
And when its wings were weary with the flight,  
And the cold airs of morn were coming up,  
Lo ! the white flowers were melting out of view,  
And it came wheeling back—ah ! heavily—  
To the great laughing earth that gleam'd below !  
God will not show himself to prying eyes :  
Could Reason scale the battlements of heaven,  
Religion were a vain and futile thing,  
And Faith a toy for childhood or the mad ;  
The humble heart sees farther than the soul.  
Love is the key to knowledge—to true power ;  
And he who loveth all things, knoweth all.  
Religion is the true Philosophy !  
Faith is the last great link twixt God and man.  
There is more wisdom in a whisper'd prayer,  
Than in the ancient lore of all the schools :  
The soul upon its knees holds God by the hand.  
Worship is wisdom as it is in heaven !  
' I do believe ! help Thou my unbelief !'  
Is the last, greatest utterance of the soul.  
God came to me as Truth—I saw him not ;  
He came to me as Love—and my heart broke,  
And from its inmost deeps there came a cry,  
' My Father ! oh ! my Father, smile on me ;'  
And the Great Father smiled.

Come not to God with questions on thy lips ;  
He will have love—love and a holy trust,  
And the self-abnegation of the child.  
'Tis a far higher wisdom to believe,  
Than to cry ' Question, at the porch of truth.  
Think not the Infinite will calmly brook  
The plummet of the finite in its deeps.  
The humble cottager I saw last night,  
Sitting among the shadows at his door,  
With his great Bible open on his knee—

His grandchild sporting near him on the grass,  
 When his day's work was done—and pointing still  
 With horny finger as he read the lines,  
 Had, in his child-like trust and confidence,  
 Far more of wisdom on his furrow'd brow,  
 Than Kant in proving that there is a God,  
 Or Plato buried in Atlantis dreams!"

Still more directly is the moral of the poem stated in the following words, which leave Alexis a "little child."—

"The last secret that we learn is this—  
 That being is a circle after all.  
 And the last line we draw in after life,  
 Rejoins the arc of childhood when complete :  
 That to be more than man is to be less."

We need not dwell on the identity of this statement with the words of Jesus—"Except a man become as a little child, he can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven;" nor express our joy at finding these words—which are at present a stumbling-block to many, in this proud and sceptical age, when intellect is worshipped as a God, and humility trampled on as a slave—taken up, set in the splendid imagery, and sung in the lofty measures of one of our most gifted young poets.

We have not analysed the story, for this reason, that story, properly speaking, there is none. Two couples are the principal interlocutors—Ferdinand and Caroline—Alexis and Flora. The first are all bliss and blue sky together; they seem almost in heaven already. Alexis, again, is a kind of Manfred—without the melancholy end of that hero. Certain spirits form a conspiracy against him, and lead him through wild weltering abysses of struggle—very powerfully described—during which he forgets poor Flora, and a lady named Edith dies in love for him. When he returns to himself, and reaches the solid ground of hope, he returns to Flora too, and they are left in a very happy frame—she blessing the hour of his deliverance, and he resuming his old poetical aspirations. The poem closes with a song, in the "Locksley Hall" style, on the "Poet's Mission," which is not, we think, in the author's best manner, and will be thought, by many, not quite in keeping with the Christian moral of the poem before enunciated.

And now for fault-finding. First, we state the want of

objective interest. "Night and the Soul" is just a heap of fine and beautiful things. The story has no hinge. The plot is nothing. You might almost begin to read the book at the end, and close it at the beginning. Secondly, there is no dramatic skill displayed in the management of the dialogue. All the characters talk equally well, and all talk too long. All are poets or poetesses, uttering splendid soliloquies. Hence inevitably arise considerable monotony and tedium. Thirdly, we demur to that Spirit-scene altogether. Either these beings should have been described as doing *more*, or doing *less*. As it is, their introduction is a mere excrescence, although it is redeemed by much striking poetry. Fourthly, there is a good deal of the *hideous* in the poem, imitated, apparently, from the worse passages of "Festus." We give one specimen—the worst, however, in the volume (page 132):—

"Last night I dream'd the universe was mad,  
And that the sun its Cyclopean eye  
Roll'd glaring like a maniac's in the heavens;  
And moons and comets, link'd together, scream'd  
Like bands of witches at their carnivals,  
And stream'd like wandering hell along the sky;  
And that the awful stars, through the red light,  
Glinted at one another wickedly,  
Throbbing and chilling with intensest hate,  
While through the whole a nameless horror ran;  
And worlds dropp'd from their place i' the shuddering.  
Like leaves of Autumn, when a mighty wind  
Makes the trees shiver through their thickest robes.  
Great spheres crack'd in the midst, and belch'd out flame,  
And sputtering fires went crackling over heaven;  
And space yawn'd blazing stars; and Time shrieked out,  
That hungry fire was eating everything!  
And scorch'd fiends, down in the nether hell,  
Cried out, 'The universe is mad—is mad!'  
And the great thing in its convulsions flung  
System on system, till the caldron boiled  
(Space was the caldron, and all hell the fire),  
And every giant limb o' the universe  
Dilated and collapse'd, till it grew wan,  
And I could see its naked ribs gleam out,  
Beating like panting fire—and I awoke.  
'Twas not all dream;—such is the world to me."

This will never do. Fifthly, Mr. Bigg appears to us to write too fast and too diffusely. Many of his passages would be greatly improved by leaving out every third line.

This, however, is an ungracious task, and we must hurry it over. The author of "Night and the Soul" is a genuine poet. He has original genius—prolific fancy—the resources, too, of an ample scholarship—an unbounded command of poetic language—and, above all, a deeply-human, reverent, and pious spirit breathing in his soul. On the future career of such an one, there can rest no shadows of uncertainty. A little pruning, a little more pains in elaborating, and the selection of an interesting story for his future poems, are all he requires to rank him, by and by, with our foremost living poets.

#### NO. IV.—GERALD MASSEY.\*

GERALD MASSEY has not the voluptuous tone, the felicitous and highly-wrought imagery, or the sustained music of Smith; nor the diffusive splendor and rich general spirit of poetry in which all Bigg's verses are steeped; nor the amazing subtlety, depth, and pervasive purpose of Yendys's song. His poetry is neither sustained as a whole, nor highly finished in almost any of its parts; its power lies in separate sparkles of intense brilliance, shining on what is generally a dark ground—like moonbeams gleaming on a midnight wave. Whether it be from the extreme brightness of those sparkles, or from the gloom which they relieve, certain we are that we have never made so many *marks* in the same compass in any poem. Indeed, we have seldom followed any such practice; but in Massey's case we felt irresistibly compelled to it—his beauties had such a sudden and startling effect. They rose at our feet like fluttered birds of game; they stood up in our path like rose-bushes amid groves of pine. Before saying anything more of this poet's merits or faults, we shall transcribe some of these markings.

\* The Ballad of Babe Christabel, and other Lyrical Poems. With additional Pieces, and a Preface. By GERALD MASSEY.



" In lonely loveliness she grew  
A shape all music, light, and love,  
With startling looks so eloquent of  
The spirit burning into view.

Her brow—fit home for daintiest dreams—  
With such a *dawn of light* was crown'd,  
And *reeling ringlets rippled round*  
Like sunny sheaves of golden beams."

' The trees, like hurden'd prophets, yearn'd,  
*Rapt in a wind of prophecy.*'

Hear this exquisite picture of a lover's heart, in the dark,  
rising to the image of his mistress :—

" Heart will plead, ' Eyes cannot see her. They are blind with tears of pain,'  
And it *climbeth up and straineth for dear life to look and hark*  
While I call her once again ; but there cometh no refrain,  
And it *droppeth down and dieth in the dark.*"

" I heard faith's *low sweet singing in the night,*  
And *groping through the darkness touch'd God's hand.*"

" Some bird in sudden sparkles of fine sound  
*Hurries its startled being into song.*"

" No star goes down, but climbs in other skies.  
The rose of sunset folds its glory up,  
To burst again from out the heart of dawn ;  
And love is never lost, though hearts run waste,  
And sorrow makes the chasten'd heart a seer ;  
The deepest dark reveals the starriest hope,  
And Faith can trust her heaven behind the veil."

" The *sweetest swallow-dip of a tender smile*  
Ran round your mouth in thrillings."

" A *spirit-feel* is in the solemn air."

' Unto dying eyes  
The dark of death doth blossom into stars."

" Sweet eyes of starry tenderness, through which  
The *soul of some immortal sorrow* looks !"

" Sorrow hath reveal'd what we ne'er had known,  
With *joy's wreath tumbled o'er our blinded eyes.*"

" Darks of diamonds, grand as nights of stars."

" 'Tis the old story ! ever the blind world  
Knows not its angels of deliverance,  
Till they stand glorified 'twixt earth and heaven."

" Ye sometimes lead my feet to walk the *angel side of life.*"

" Come, worship beauty in the forest temple, dim and hush,  
Where stands magnificence dreaming ! and God *burneth in the bush.*"

"The murkiest midnight that frowns from the skies  
Is *at heart* a radiant morrow."

"The kingliest kings are crown'd with thorn."

"When will the world quicken for liberty's birth,  
Which she waiteth, with *eager wings beating the dawn*."

"Oh, but 'twill be a merry day, the world shall set apart,  
When strife's last brand is broken in the last crown'd tyrant's heart!"

"The herald of our coming Christ leaps in the womb of time;  
The poor's grand army treads the Age's march with step sublime."

"Yet she weeteth not I love her;  
Never dare I tell the sweet  
Tale, but to the stars above her,  
And the flowers that kiss her feet."

"And the maiden-meek voice of the womanly wife  
Still bringeth the heavens nigher,  
For it rings like the voice of God o'er my life,  
Aye bidding me climb up higher."

"*Merry as laughter 'mong the hills,*  
*Spring dances at my heart!*"

"Where life hath climaxt like a wave  
That breaks in perfect rest."

We might long persist at this pleasant task of plucking wild-flowers. But we hasten to speak of some of the more prominent merits and defects of this remarkable volume. One main merit of Massey is his intense earnestness, which reminds you almost of Ebenezer Elliot, with his red-hot poker pen. Like him, he has "put his heart"—his big, burning heart—into his poems. Mr. Lewes, of the "Leader," opines that Massey wants the power of transmuting experience into poetic forms, and that nowhere does the real soul of the man utter itself: two most unfortunate assertions—for the evident effort, and often successful attainment, of this author, more than with most writers, are, to set his own life to music, and to express in verse all the poetry with which it has teemed. He has been a sore struggler—with poverty, with a narrow sphere, with doubts and darkness; and you have this struggle echoed in his rugged and fiery song. He has been a giant under Etna; and his voice is a *suspirium de profundis*. Although still a very young man, he has undergone ages of experience; and, although we had not known all this from his preface and notes we might have confidently concluded it from his poetry.

In his earlier poems, we find his fire of earnestness burning in fierce, exaggerated, and volcanic forms. The poet appears an incarnation of the Evil Genius of poverty, and reminds you of Robert Burns in his wilder mood. He sets Chartism to music. He sings, with strange variations, "A man's a man for a' that." But this springs from circumstances, not from the poet himself; and you are certain that progress and change of situation will elicit a finer and healthier frame of spirit—and so it has proved. Although his poems are not arranged in chronological order, internal evidence convinces us that those in which he is at once simplest and most subdued have been written last. A change of the most benignant kind has come o'er the spirit of his dream, and has been, we beg leave to think, greatly owing to female influence. He has found his better angel in that amiable wife, whose virtues he has so often celebrated in his song, and in whom he sees a tenth muse.

The homage done by him to the domestic affections, his ardent worship of his own hearth, is one of the most pleasing characteristics of Gerald Massey's poetry, and has been noticed by more than one of his critics. It comes out, not for the sake of ostentation, or artistic effect, but spontaneously and irresistibly in many parts of his poems. We have great pleasure in transcribing words addressed to him by an eminent writer of the day, in which we cordially concur: "One everlasting subject of people's poetry is love, and you are at the age at which a man is bound to sing it. The devil has had power over love-poems too long, because the tastes of the people were too gross to relish anything but indecency, because the married men left the love-singing to the unmarried ones. Now, love before marriage is the tragedy of 'Hamlet' with the part of Hamlet left out! Therefore the bachelor love-poets, being forced to make their subject complete, to go beyond mere sentiment, were driven into illicit love. I say that is a shame. I say that the highest joys of love are married joys, and that the married man ought to be the true love-poet.—Now God has given you, as I hear, in his great love and mercy, a charming wife and child. There is your school. There are your treasured ideas. Sing about them, and the people will hear you, because you will be loving, and real, and

honest, and practical, speaking from your heart straight to theirs. But write simply what you do feel and see, not what you think you *ought* to feel and see. The very simplest love-poet goes deepest. Get to yourself, I beseech you, all that you can of English and Scotch ballads, and consider them as what they are—models. Read ‘Auld Robin Gray’ twenty times over. Study it word for word.”

The poem entitled the “Bridal” is hardly so simple as this writer would wish; but, as a *rich marriage-dress*, it challenges all admiration.

We must quote some passages.

“Alive with eyes, the village sees  
The Bridal *dawning* from the trees,  
And housewives swarm i’ the sun like bees.

Silence sits i’ the belfry-choir !  
Up in the twinkling air the spire  
Throbs, as it *flutter’d wings of fire*.

The winking windows, stained rare,  
Blush with their gout of glory, fair  
As heaven’s shower-arch had melted there

But enter—lordlier splendors brim,  
Such mists of gold and purple swim,  
And the light falls so rich and dim.

\* \* \* \*

Even so doth love life’s doors unbar,  
Where all the hidden glories are,  
That from the windows shone afar.

\* \* \* \*

Sumptuous as Iris, when she swims  
With rainbow-robe on dainty limbs,  
The bride’s full beauty overbrims.

The gazers drink rare overflows,  
Her cheek a lovelier damask glows,  
And on his arm she leans more close.

A drunken joy reels in his blood,  
His being doth so bud and bud,  
He wanders an enchanted wood.

Last night with weddable white arms,  
And thoughts that throng’d with quaint alarms,  
She trembled o’er her mirror’d charms.

Like Eve first glassing her new life;  
And the Maid startled at the Wife,  
Heart-pained with a sweet warm strife.

*The unknown sea moans on her shore  
Of life; she hears the breakers roar,  
But, trusting him, she'll fear no more.*  
\* \* \* \*

The blessing given, the ring is on;  
And at God's altar radiant run  
The current of two lives in one.

Husht with happiness, every sense  
Is crowned at the heart intense,  
And silence hath such eloquence!

Down to his feet her meek eyes stoop  
As *there* her love should pour its cup;  
But like a king, he lifts them up.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Alone they hold their marriage-feast—  
Fresh from the chism of the priest,  
He would not have the happiest jest

To storm her brows with a crimson line;  
And, sooth, they need no wings of wine  
To float them into love's divine.

So *Strength and Beauty, hand in hand,*  
Go forth into the honey'd land  
*Lit by the love-moon golden-grand,*

Where God hath built their bridal bower,  
And on the top of life they tower,  
And taste the Eden's perfect hour.

No lewd eyes over my shoulder look!  
They do but ope the blessed book  
Of marriage in their hallow'd nook.

O, flowery be the paths they press;  
And ruddiest human fruitage bless  
Them with a lavish loveliness!

Melodious move their wedded life  
Through shocks of time and storms of strife  
Husband true, and perfect wife!"

How genius can glorify every object or incident! Had Mr. Massey been describing the marriage of two spirits who are to spend eternity together, or the nuptials of philosophy and faith, he could not have expended more wealth and splendor

of imagery than he does upon what is substantially the story of two children driven by a foe or storm into a nook, where they fondle each other, or weep in concert, till the inevitable enemy comes up and removes them both. What else is the happiest mortal marriage? Still, the spirit of the strain is beautiful, and reminds us forcibly of the one song of poor Lapraik to his wife, of which Burns thus writes:—

“There was ae sang among the rest,  
 Aboon them a' it pleased me best,  
 Which some kind husband had address'd  
 To some sweet wife.  
 It thirl'd the heart-strings through the breast,  
 A' to the life.”

Massey has no elements of the epic or constructive poet about him. He is simply and solely a true lyrist, and as such is both strong and sweet; but with sweetness in general, although not always, rejoicing over strength—sweetness, we mean, of thought, rather than of language and versification. Both of these are often sufficiently rugged. His sentiment seldom halts, but his verse and language often do. Some of his poems remind us of the dishevelled morning head of a beautiful child. This, however, we greatly prefer to that affectation of style, that absurd elaborate jargon, which many true poets of the day are allowing to crust over their style. Even our gifted friend Yendys must beware of a tendency he has lately exhibited in “Balder” to pedantry and far-fetched forms of speech. Strong simple English can express any thought, however subtle; any imagination, however lofty; any reflection, however profound; any emotion, however warm; and any shade of fancy, however delicate. Massey, in all his more earnest and loftier strains, shuns the faults of over-elaboration and daintiness, and throws out diamonds in the rough. We may refer, as one of the best specimens of his stern and stalwart battle-axe manner, to “New Year’s Eve in Exile.” Hear these lines, for instance:—

“Men who had broken battle’s burning lines,  
 Dealing life with their looks, death with their hands;  
 And strode like Salamanders through war’s flame;  
 And in the last stern charge of desperate valor  
 On death’s scythe dash’d with force that turn’d its edge  
 \* \* \* \* \*

*Earnest as fire they sat, and reverent  
 As though a God were present in their midst;  
 Stern, but serene and hopeful, prayerful, brave  
 As Cromwell's Ironsides on an eve of battle.  
 Each individual life as clench'd and knit,  
 As though beneath their robes their fingers clutched  
 The weapon sworn to strike a tyrant down;  
 Such proud belief lifted their kindling brows;  
 Such glowing purpose hunger'd in their eyes.*

\* \* \* \*

*The new year flashes on us sadly grand,  
 Leaps in our midst with ringing armor on,  
 Strikes a mail'd hand in ours, and bids us arm  
 Ere the first trumpet sound the hour of onset.  
 Dense darkness lies on Europe's winter world;  
 Stealthily and grim the Bear comes creeping on  
 Out of the North, and all the peoples sleep  
 By Freedom's smouldering watch-fire; there is none  
 To snatch the brand and dash it in his face."*

This is masculine writing; resembling thy first and best style, O dear author of "The Roman"—a style to which we trust to see thee returning in thy future works. The grandest poetry has ever been, and shall ever be, written on *rocks*—like the stony handwriting traced by the tribes in their march through that great and terrible wilderness; or like the fiery lines which God's hand cut upon the two tables of the law.

We notice in Massey, as in all young poets, occasional imitations of other writers; nay, one or two petty larcenies. For example, he says,

"She summers on heaven's hills of myrrh."

Aird had said, in his "Devil's Dream,"

"And thou shalt summer high in bliss upon the hills of God."

Again, Massey says,

"The flowers fold their cups like praying hands,  
 And with droop'd heads await the blessing Night  
 Gives with her silent magnanimity."

Aird in the same marvellous dream had used the words,

"The silent magnanimity of Nature and her God."

In the same page Massey says,

"How dear it is to mark th' immortal life  
 Deepen and darken in her large round eyes."

In Aird's "Buy a Broom" we find the following lines, *quoted*, however, and from what author we forget —

"Like Pandora's eye,  
When first it *darken'd with immortal life.*"

In page 51 the following lines occur :—

"Wept glorious *tears* that *telescope* the soul,  
And bring heaven nearer to the eyes of Faith."

We ourselves had said, "the most powerful of all telescopes is a tear." These, however, are really all the distinct instances of plagiarism we have noticed; and, besides being probably quite unintentional, they bear no proportion whatever to the numerous and splendid originalities of the volume.

We have endeavored to find out from Mr. Massey's volume what his religious sentiments are; and think that, on the whole, he seems to have got little further, as yet, than the worship of Nature. We can forewarn him that this will not long satisfy his heart. Nature, to say the least of it, is a crude, imperfect process; not a complete and rounded result, far less a living cause. No delusion is becoming more general, and none is more contemptibly false, than a certain Brahminical worship of this universe, as if it were anything more than a combination of brute matter, colored by distance and fancy with poetic hues. Carlyle has greatly aided our young poets to the pitiful conclusion that Matter is God. He cries out, "The Earth is my mother, and divine." He says again, after sneering at the authority of the Bible, "There is one book, of the inspiration of which there cannot be any doubt," namely, Nature; forgetting that all the difficulties, and *far more*, which beset the thought that God is the inspirer of the Bible, beset the notion that he is the Author of nature; and that, if earth be *as a whole* divine, then its evils, imperfections, and unutterable woes must be divine, and consequently eternal too. We must warn young poets against that excessive idolatry of light, heat, law, life, and their multitudinous effects, which are leading them so terribly astray, and sowing their pages with gross materialism, disguised under a transparent veil of Pantheistic mysticism. They see Silenus through a dream, and think him Pan. and



make this Pan their only God. Connected with this, is that worship which they say can be best performed without going to church, and the fittest altars of which are

"The mountains and the ocean,  
Earth, air, stars—all that springs from the Great Whole,  
Who hath produced, and will receive, the soul ;"

forgetting that this worship, being that of the imagination, not of the heart, must be vague and cold ; that energy, zeal, and piety have never in former times been long sustained without the aid of public as well as of personal devotion ; that the most of those who have thus " worshipped they knew not *what*," in a manner they could hardly tell *how*, have been unhappy and morbid beings ; that Milton, whose example they often quote, although he left his church, did not forsake his Bible ; that Jesus Christ, whom they venerate, while he went up again and again to a mountain to pray, himself alone, far more frequently was found in the synagogues on the Sabbath-day ; and that, even on merely artistic principles, no finer spectacle can be witnessed on earth than a man of genius not retiring into haughty isolation, and bowing the knee with greater pride than if he blasphemed, but mingling quietly with the common stream of the multitude which is pouring to the House of God, and uniting his voice with their psalmody, his heart with their thanksgiving, and his soul with their adoration.

Since commencing this paper we have read a book—attributed to Dr. Whewell, and published by Parker—on "The Plurality of Worlds."\* Years ago, we had reached all the leading conclusions in this remarkable volume. Its merit is, that it bases what have long been our intuitions upon a solid foundation of logic and facts, proving almost to a demonstration, that earth is the only part of the creation—at all events, of the solar system—which is yet inhabited. Our object at present in mentioning it, is to proclaim its value as a deadly blow in the face of creation-worship and Pantheism. It de-

\* See our thoughts at greater length on this subject in a recent article in the "Eclectic Review," to which we are happy to say the author in his "Dialogue," a masterly reply to his opponents, newly published, refers with satisfaction.

monstrates that the glory of the heavenly bodies is all illusion—that they are really in the crudest condition—that there is not the most distant probability that they shall ever be fit for the habitation of intelligent beings—that man is totally distinct from all other races of beings, and is absolutely, essentially, and for ever superior to, and distinct from, the lower animals—and that, besides, he shall, in all probability, be renewed and elevated by a supernatural intervention. It hints, too, at our favorite thought (stated in our paper on Chalmers, in this volume), that, at death, we leave this material creation for ever, and enter on a spiritual sphere, disconnected from this, and where sun, moon, and stars are the “things invisible;” that, to use the words of Macintosh to Hall, “we shall awake from this dream, and find ourselves in *other spheres* of existence.” And all these, and many similar ideas, are not thrown out as mere conjectures, nor even as bold gleams of insight, but are shown to be favored by analogy—nay, some of them *founded on fact*. We never read a book with more thorough conviction that we were reading what was true. Had the author gone a step or two farther still, we could have followed him with confidence. Had he predicted the absolute annihilation of matter, we could have substantiated his statement by the words of scripture: “They shall perish, but Thou remainest; yea, all of them shall be changed and folded up as a vesture; but Thou art the same, and Thy years fail not.” Again, we say that we deeply value this admirable book, as a tractate for the times. It should be peculiarly useful to those poets who, like Mr. Massey, are constantly raving about the beauty, the glory, the immensity, and the divinity of Matter, each and all being palpable delusions, since matter is neither beautiful nor glorious, nor immense, nor divine. It will show him that the glory of the moon, the planets, and the stars may be compared to the effects of morning or evening sunshine upon the towers of an infirmary, a prison, or some giant city of sin—lending a false lustre to objects which in themselves are horrible or foul.

We must now take our leave of Mr. Massey. And, notwithstanding these concluding hints, we do so with every feeling of respect, admiration, and kindly feeling. Probably since Burns, there has been no such instance of a strong untaught

poet rising up from the ranks by a few strides, grasping eminence by the very mane, and vaulting into a seat so commanding with such ease and perfect mastery. He has much yet, however, to do—to learn—and, it may be, to endure. It is yet all morning with him. Life's enchanted cup is sparkling at the brim. From early sufferings he has passed into comfort, domestic happiness, and general fame. Many veils are yet to drop from his eyes. He has yet to learn the worthlessness of human nature as a whole, the impotence of human effort, the littleness of human life, and the delusive nature of all joy which is not connected with our duty to God and man. His present sanguine hopes and notions of humanity will wither, just as the green earth and blue skies will by and by appear altogether insufficient to fill and satisfy his soul. This process we regard inevitable to all genuine thinkers and lofty poets; but the great question is, Does it result in *souring* or in *strengthening* the man? Carlyle and Foster both passed through this disenchanting process; but how different the results! The one has become savage in his despair as a flayed wild beast. The other became milder and calmer in proportion to the depth of his melancholy. And the reason of this difference is very simple. Carlyle believes in nothing but the universe. Foster believed in a Father, a Savior, and a future world. If Mr. Massey comes (as we trust he shall) to a true belief, it will corroborate him for every trial and every sad internal or external experience, and he will stand like an Atlas above the ruins of a world, calm, firm, pensive, but pressing forwards, and *looking on high*.\*

\* Since this paper was written, we have read some specimens of Massey's prose, in his preface to his third edition, and in his review of "Balder" in the "Eclectic." It is most excellent, clear, massive, masterly English, very refreshing in this age of mystical fudge.

# Modern Critics.

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## NO. I.—HAZLITT AND HALLAM.

WE have chosen the above two names as representing two opposite styles of criticism—the impulsive and the mechanical—or, otherwise, the genial and the learned. In speaking of Hazlitt, we have nothing to do with him as a man, a politician, or a historian, but simply as a critic; and, in speaking of Hallam, we have nothing to do with him as a historian, but solely as the writer of those literary criticisms which have recently been collected into a separate publication.

William Hazlitt was brutally abused while alive, and has been but partially appreciated since his death. Indeed, in many quarters he seems entirely forgotten. Sacrificing, as he did, popular applause in search of posthumous fame, he seems to have lost both—like the dog in the fable, shadow and substance seem alike to have given him the slip. Our proud and prosy Quarterlies, while showering praise on the misty nothings which often now abuse the name of scientific or philosophic criticism—those compounds of natural and acquired dulness which disguise themselves under German terminology, and are deemed profound—seldom name, or coldly underrate, the glowingly acute, gorgeously clear, and dazzlingly deep criticisms of poor Hazlitt.

Harry Cockburn thinks him ineffably inferior to Lord Jeffrey. Macaulay first steals from Hazlitt, and then puffs Hallam. Bulwer and Talfourd have done him justice, but rather in a patronising way. Horne did his best to imitate him, and paid back the pilferings in praise. But De Quincey and one

or two more seem alone aware of the fact that no thinker of such rich seminal mind—of such genuine originality, insight, and enthusiasm, has been ever so neglected or outraged as the author of "The Spirit of the Age."

Hazlitt was, in many respects, the most *natural* of critics. He was *born* to criticise, not in a small and captious way, but as a just, generous, although stern and rigorous judge. Nature had denied him great constructive, or dramatic, or synthetic power—the power of the highest kind of poet or philosopher. But he possessed that mixture in proper proportions of the acute and the imaginative, the profound and the brilliant, the cool and the enthusiastic, which goes to constitute the true critic. Hence his criticism is a fine compound—pleasing, on the one hand, the lover of analysis, who feels that its power can go no farther; and, on the other, the young and ardent votary of literature, who feels that Hazlitt has expressed in language what *he* only could "with the faltering tongue and the glistening eye." When he has a favorite, and especially an old favorite author to discuss, it becomes as great a luxury to witness as to feel his rapture. Even elderly enthusiasts, whose ardor is somewhat *passée*, might contemplate him with emotions such as Scott has so exquisitely described in Louis XI, when looking at the hungry Quentin Durward devouring his late and well-won breakfast. Youth—hot, eager, joyous youth—sparkles in Hazlitt's best criticisms even to the last. And yet, beside all his bursts and bravuras, there is always looking on the stern, clear, piercing eye of Old Analysis. Why is it that Hazlitt, thus eminently fitted to attract all classes, has failed to be generally popular? Many answers might be given to this question. There was first the special victimisation he underwent during his lifetime from the reviews and magazines. Old Gifford was his bitterest, although by no means his ablest opponent. The power wielded thirty years ago by that little arid mass of commonplace and dried venom is, to us, absolutely marvellous. The manner in which he exercised the critical profession showed, indeed, that he was perfectly skilled in his former one, especially in the adroit use of the awl. He was admirable at boring small holes; but beyond this he was nothing. If Shakespeare's works had appeared in his time, he would have treated

them precisely as he treated Shelley's and Keats', unless, indeed, they had been submitted to his revision before, or dedicated to him at publication. Otherwise, how he would have ostracised "Othello;" mauled "Macbeth;" torn up "The Tempest;" mouthed, like a dog at the moon, against the "Midsummer Night's Dream;" laughed at "Lear;" raved at "Romeo and Juliet;" and admitted merit only in "Timon," because it suited his morbid temper, and in the "Comedy of Errors," because it melted down his evil humors into grim laughter. It is lamentable to think of such a man being respected by Byron, and feared by Hunt and Lamb. It is more lamentable still, to remember that he and his coadjutors were able to half-madden Shelley, to kill Keats, and to add gall and wormwood to the native bitterness of Hazlitt's spirit.

But he had other opponents, who, if not animated by all Gifford's spirit, had ten times the talent. Wilson and Lockhart bent all their young power against a writer whom both in their hearts admired, and from whom both had learned much. The first twenty-five volumes of "Blackwood's Magazine" are disgraced by incessant, furious, and scurrilous attacks upon the person, private character, motives, talents, and moral and religious principles of Hazlitt, which future ages shall regard with wonder, indignation, and disgust. "Ass," "blockhead," "fool," "idiot," "quack," "villain," "infidel," &c., are a specimen of the epithets applied to this master-spirit. "Old Maga" has greatly improved in this respect since; but there is at least one of its present contributors who would perpetrate, if he durst,\* similar enormities of injustice, and whose maximum of will to injure and abuse all minds superior to his own, is only restrained by his minimum of power. Need we name the laureate of Clavers, and the libeller of the noble children of the Scottish Covenant?

We see nothing wrong in genius now and then turning round to rend and trample on its pertinacious foes. But Hazlitt was far too thin-skinned. He felt his wounds too keenly, he acknowledged them too openly, and gave thus a

\* He has since dared! *Vide* that tissue of filthy nonsense, which none but an ape of the first magnitude could have vomited, yclept "Firmilian."

great advantage to his opponents. This was partly accounted for from his nervous temperament, and partly from his precarious circumstances. It was very easy for Lord Jeffrey, sitting in state in his palace in Moray Place, to curl his lip in cool contempt, or even to burst out into laughter, over attacks on himself in "Ebony;" or for Wordsworth, in his drawing-room on Rydal Mount, to grumble over the "Edinburgh," ere dashing it to the other side of the room; it is very easy still, for those of us who are not dependent for subsistence on our writings, to treat insolent injustice with pity or scorn; but the tendency of such attacks upon Hazlitt was to snatch the bread from his mouth, to lower the opinion of his capacity with the booksellers, whose serf he was, and to drive him to mean subterfuges, which his soul abhorred, to prevent him literally from starving. He is said, a little before his death, to have met Horne, and said to him, "I have carried a volcano in my breast for the last three hours up and down Pall Mall; I have striven mortally to quench, to quell it, but it will not. *Can you lend me a shilling? I have not tasted food for two days.*"

Want of thorough early training, an unsettled and wandering life, want of time for systematic study, and want of self-control and of domestic happiness, combined to lessen the artistic merit, and have limited to some extent the permanent power, of Hazlitt's writings. Hence they are full of faults—the faults never, however, of weakness, but of haste, carelessness and caprice. They swarm with gossiping anecdote, with flashy clap-trap, with egotism, with jets of bitterest venom, and with sounding paradoxes. They are cast chiefly, too, in the form of slipshod essays; nor has he ever completed any great, solid, separate work, for his "Life of Napoleon" is not worthy of his powers. His superficial readers—especially if their minds have been previously poisoned by reading the "Quarterly" and "Blackwood"—fasten on these faults, and never get farther. "An amusing, flimsy writer" is the highest compliment they find in their hearts to bestow on one of the finest and deepest thinkers of the day. Our misty Germanisers, again, find him too clear, too brilliant, not sufficiently conversant with Kant, Fichte, Schiller, and Goethe, and vote him obsolete. Carlyle classes him with Dermody in one pa-

per, and in another talks of him in such terms as these: "How many a poor Hazlitt must wander over God's verdant earth, like the unblest over burning deserts—passionately dig wells, and draw up only the dry quicksand, and at last die and make no sign." Such injustice is too rank long to continue rampant. Hazlitt, as a man, had errors of no little magnitude; but he was as sincere and honest a being as ever breathed. If not practically a Christian, he respected Christianity; he saw, though he shrank from, its unique and glorious character; he owned its unparalleled power; he has praised its Bible with all the enthusiasm of his heart, and with all the riches of his genius; and he would have burned his pen and the hand that held it, sooner than have set himself deliberately to sap by written innuendo, or blow up by open outrage, the faith in which his good old parents died. His writings constitute one of those quarries of thought, such as are also Bacon's "Essays," Butler's "Sermons," Boswell's "Johnson," and Coleridge's "Table Talk." They abound in gems, as sparkling as they are precious, and ever and anon a "mountain of light" lifts up its shining head. Not only are they full of profound critical dicta, but of the sharpest observations upon life and manners, upon history, and the metaphysics of the human mind. Descriptions of nature, too, are there, cool, clear, and refreshing as summer leaves. And then how fine are his panegyrics on the old masters and the old poets! And ever and anon he floats away into long glorious passages, such as that on Wordsworth and that on Coleridge, in the "Spirit of the Age"—such as his description of the effects of the Reformation—such as his panegyric on poetry—his character of Sir Thomas Browne—and his picture of the Reign of Terror! Few things in the language are greater than these. They resemble

"The long-resounding march and energy divine"

of the ancient lords of English prose—the Drydens, the Browns, the Jeremy Taylors, and the Miltons.

All so-called "beauties" of great authors we detest. They are as dull as almanacs or jest-books. They are but torn fallen feathers from the broad eagle-wing. Nor do we mean



to suggest that Hazlitt's works should be subjected to such an equivocal process. But we should like to see his "Select Works," including a selection from his essays, the whole of his "Characteristics," and his "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays"—all his lectures delivered at the Surrey Institution—a selection from his purely metaphysical works—certain passages from his "Life of Napoleon"—copious excerpts from his pictorial criticisms—and his "Spirit of the Age" entire. It is a disgrace to literature; and while there are cheap editions of Lamb and Hunt, and clear editions of Jeffrey, Smith, and Macauley, there is no good edition we know of, whether cheap or dear, of the works of a far more original thinker, eloquent writer, and earnest man, than any of them all.

We will allude but to one other feature in Hazlitt's critical character—we mean his attachment to Shakspeare and Coleridge. Others admire Shakspeare—Hazlitt loves and adores him; and this soft key of love opens to him many an intricate lock, and this deep light of adoration leads him safe through many a dark and winding way. Many prefer Ulrici, although, in fact, his work is just a "Midsummer Night's *Dream*" of Shakspeare. It is not Shakspeare himself—the clear and manly Englishman, as well as the universal genius—it is Shakspeare seen through the mists of the Brocken, casting an enormous shadow, which is mistaken for and criticised as the substance. Indeed, we can conceive no spectacle more ludicrous than that of Shakspeare in the shades reading Ulrici, and marvelling to find that he understood him so much better than himself, and saw more in him than he ever intended—nay, often the reverse of what he did intend.

Hazlitt read Shakspeare with far greater perspicacity; saw his faults, and liked him better for them; took him at his word, believed what he said, and did not go about stumbling and groping for recondite meanings and merits in its author. Shakspeare has now a great gallery of critics:—Johnson, with his sturdy generalities of encomium; Mrs. Montague, with her elegant and lady-like, if not very profound tribute; Joseph Warton's graceful papers in the "Adventurer," as well as his brother's more elaborate testimony in his "History of English Poetry;" Goethe, in his fine remarks on "Hamlet" in "Wilhelm Meister;" George Moir, in his refined and thought-

ful "Shakspeare in Germany;" Mrs. Jameson; De Quincey; Carlyle's striking sketch; Coleridge's wondrous talk about him; Hartley Coleridge's "Shakspeare a Tory and a Gentleman;" Professor Wilson's scattered splendors on the subject in the "Noctes," &c. But love for the subject, profound and watchful study of it, the blended intellect and ardor of his nature, and the graces and powers of his style, render Hazlitt, in our judgment, the best limner of that standing wonder of the world; and to his warm and living portraits we most fondly and frequently recur.

Coleridge, too—a man resembling Shakspeare in width and subtlety, although not in clearness and masculine strength and directness—was seen by Hazlitt as few else saw him, and shown by him more eloquently and enthusiastically than by any or all his other critics. He knew him in his youth. He met him first at Wem, in Shropshire, where his father was minister; and most beautifully has he described, in his "First Acquaintance with Poets," his meeting with the "noticeable man with large grey eyes." 'Tis to us the most delightful of all Hazlitt's essays, striking as it does on some of our own early associations. Like Hazlitt, the author of this sketch was the son of a dissenting (though not a unitarian) minister; like him, spent many a sad and solitary hour in the country, cheered, indeed, by books and by the loveliness and grandeur of nature; like him, has "shed tears over his unfinished manuscript," while in vain seeking adequately to transcribe his confused but burning impressions of nature and of literature; and, like him, has again and again been delighted and raised from the dust by the visits and sermons of gifted preachers, who came like sunbeams to the sequestered valley of his birth; and he can hardly, therefore, read "My First Acquaintance with Poets," or several other of Hazlitt's autobiographical essays, without a swelling heart and streaming eyes, as he thinks of the days of his own boyhood.

No man has better described than Hazlitt, Coleridge's after career, which was that of a comet among comets, more eccentric than all its lawless kindred; now assuming the form of a thin and gaseous vapor, and now becoming blood-red, solid-seeming, and

"Firing the length of Ophiuchus huge  
In the Arctic sky."

Let it ever be remembered that he fought the battle of Coleridge's fame, when he was under the cloud of public opinion, and of the opium curse; and that, although separated from him afterwards by political and other differences, he never ceased to be his ardent eulogist, as well as his honest adviser.

Peace to the memory of William Hazlitt! That pale, haggard face; those eager, restless eyes; those dark, grey locks; that brain, ever prolific of new thoughts; and that heart, ever palpitating with new, fierce, or rapturous passions—are now all still and quenched in the sepulchre. We dare rear no temple over his dust—nor is it worthy of a pyramid; but his works form, nevertheless, a noble monument—solid as marble, and clear and brilliant as flame—expressing at once the strength and the splendor of his unrivalled *critical* genius.

In point of learning, culture, calmness, and the command of the powers he has, Hallam, of course, excels Hazlitt, even as a bust is much smoother than a man's head; but he is altogether destitute of that fine instinctive sense of poetic beauty which was in Hazlitt's mind, and of that eloquent, fervid, and fearless expression of it which came, like inspiration, into Hazlitt's pen. The "gods have not made him poetical;" and when he talks about poetry, you are reminded of a blind man discoursing on the rainbow. He has far too much tact and knowledge to commit any gross blunder—nay, the bust seems often half-alive, but it never becomes more. You never feel that this man, who talks so ably about politics, and evidence, and international law, has a "native and indefeasible right" to speak to you about poetry. The power of criticising it is as completely denied him as is a sixth sense; and worst, he is not conscious of the want.

For he has often essayed to criticise our greatest poets, and has displayed intimate knowledge of their writings, and of the ages in which they lived. But it is merely mechanical knowledge. He knows poets by *head-mark*, not by *heart-recognition*. He may see, but he scarcely feels, their beauties. He is not, indeed, one of those pitiful small snarlers, with microscopic eyes, who pick out petty faults in works of genius, blunders in syntax, perhaps, mixed metaphors, and so on, and present such splinters as adequate specimens of the building.

Nor is he, like Dr. Johnson, furnished with a blazing Cyclopean orb on one side of his head, and an eye totally blind on the other, so that his judgments, according to his position, are now the truest, and now the falsest, in literature—now final as the laws of the Medes, and now contemptible as the opinions of schoolboys. Hallam is seldom unduly minute, never unfair, and rarely one-sided; his want is simply that of the warm insight which “loosens the bands of the Orions” of poetry, and gives a swift solution of all its splendid problems.

His paper on Ariosto is correct and creeping; although, surely, we must demur to his dictum that he was surpassed only by three of his predecessors—Homer, Virgil, and Dante. Has he forgotten Æschylus, Sophocles, and Lucretius? In his remarks on Tasso (which are otherwise good, Tasso being quite the artificial poet that Hallam can fully appreciate), he rather paradoxically says that “the ‘Jerusalem’ is the great epic poem, in the strict sense, of modern times.” Is Milton not a modern, and in what strict sense is “Paradise Lost” not an epic? What condition of the Epos does it not fulfil? His remarks on “Don Quixote” are poor, compared to Hazlitt’s on the same subject in his paper on “Standard Novels,” which appeared in the “Edinburgh Review.” His paper on Spenser is judicious, and, on the whole, accurate, but has a general coldness of tone insufferable in reference to such a rich and imaginative writer, and contains one or two hyper-criticisms. For instance, he objects to the much admired description of a forest—

“The sailing pine, the cedar proud and tall,  
The vine-prop elm, the poplar never dry,  
The builder oak, sole king of forests all,  
The aspine good for staves, the cypress funeral;”

because, forsooth, a natural forest never contains such a variety of species! This is sad work. Has he forgotten that the “Fairy Queen” is not merely a poem, but a dream; and should not a dream have its own dream-scenery? We call his attention to the following passage from Addison—a critic of a very different order—a passage not less distinguished by its philosophic truth, than by its exquisite beauty:—

“The poet is not obliged to attend nature in the slow ad-

vances she makes from one season to another, or to observe her conduct in the successive production of plants and flowers; he may draw into his description all the beauties of spring and autumn, and make the whole year contribute something to render it the more agreeable. His rose-trees, woodbines, and jessamines may flower together, and his beds be covered at the same time with lilies, violets, and amarantha. His *soil* is not *restrained* to any *particular* set of *plants*; but is proper either for *oaks* or *myrtles*, and adapts itself to the products of every climate. Oranges may grow wild in it; myrrh may be met with in every hedge; and if he thinks it proper to have a grove of spices, he can quickly command sun enough to raise it. Nay, he can make several new species of flowers with richer scents and higher colors than any that grow in the gardens of nature. His concerts of birds may be as full and harmonious, and his woods as thick and gloomy, as he pleases. He is at no more expense in a long vista than in a short one, and can as easily throw his cascades from a precipice of half a mile high, as from one of twenty yards. He has his choice of the winds, and can turn the course of his rivers, in all the variety of meanders that are most delightful to the reader's imagination."

Such are a poet's prerogatives, and would

"Classic Hallam, much renown'd for Greek,"

snatch these from Spenser,

"High priest of all the Muses' mysteries?"

In the same spirit he presumes, with some misgivings, however, to object to the celebrated stanza describing the varied concert of winds, waves, birds, voices, and musical instruments in the "Bower of Bliss," and compares it to that which tormented Hogarth's "Enraged Musician!" And this is a critic on poetry!—worse, if possible, than a pre-Raphaelite on art.

His account of Shakspeare begins with the following elegant sentence:—"Of William Shakspeare, whom, through the *mouths* of those whom he has inspired to body forth the *modifications* of his mighty mind, we seem to know better than any human writer, it may be truly said that we scarcely know anything." Certainly, in another sense, he knows little of

him! In the account that follows of Shakspeare's plays, he actually sets "Love's Labor Lost," that dull tissue of "mere havers," as they say in Scotland, and which many have doubted to be Shakspeare's, since it displays not a spark of his wit, genius, or even sense, above the "Comedy of Errors," the most laughable farce in the world, above the romantic "Two Gentlemen of Verona," and above the "Taming of the Shrew," that delightful half-plagiarism of the great dramatist's. He accuses "Romeo and Juliet" of a "want of thoughtful philosophy." It is true that it does not abound in set didactic soliloquies, like those of "Hamlet" or "Timon," but how much of the *essence* of profoundest thought has gone to the production of Mercutio and of the Apothecary, and that wierd shop of his. "Twelfth Night" he underrates when compared to "Much Ado about Nothing." We dare to differ from him in this, and to prefer the humors of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew—not to speak of Malvolio—to the immortal Dogberry and Verges themselves. How feeble what he says of Lear, having in madness "thoughts more profound than in his prosperous hour he could have conceived," when compared to Charles Lamb's remarks on the same subject, although suggested apparently by them! Of "Timon" he coldly predicates, "It abounds with signs of his genius." "Timon!" the grandest burst of poetic misanthropy ever written, certain soliloquies, nay, sentences in which, condense all the satire of Juvenal and the invective of Byron! "What, wouldst thou to Athens?" asks Apemantus. "Thee thither in a whirlwind."—"What wouldst thou best liken to thy flatterers?" "Women nearest, but men—*men are the things themselves!*" Another critic speaks of the excellent scolding of Timon, as if it were the Billingsgate of a furious fishwoman, and not the foul spittle of an angry God. Just as we have said elsewhere that De Quincey's third "Suspirium de Profundis" is a sigh that can only be answered by the Second Advent, so Shakspeare's protest in "Timon" against man as he is and things as they are, lies yet, and shall lie, unlifted and unreplyed to, till the great Day of Judgment. That Coriolanus has the "grandeur of sculpture," is a criticism suggested rather by Kemble's personation of him than by the character himself. He, as Shakspeare describes him, is no more like

sculpture than Fergus MacIvor, or any other fierce, proud, restless Highland chieftain. He may be, as a marble statue, colossal; but surely not, as a marble statue, calm. The rest of his remarks on Shakspeare are just the thousand times reiterated truisms about his creative power, knowledge of human nature, superiority to the dramatists of his age, and contain nothing but what has been said before, and said far better, by Johnson and Hazlitt.

His observations on Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger show deep acquaintance with those writers, deeper than most people who regard their own moral reputation would now care to be known to possess. We may once for all tell the uninitiated that more beastly, elaborate, and incessant filth and obscenity are not to be found in all literature, than in the plays of these three dramatists; and that we, at least, could only read one or two of them through. They repelled us by the strong shock of disgust, and we have never since been able to understand of what materials the men are made who have read and re-read them, paused and lingered over them, dwelt fondly on their beauties, and even ventured to compare them to the plays of Shakspeare; the morality of which, considering his age, is as wonderful as the genius. If our readers think this criticism extreme, let them turn, not to the disgusting books themselves, but to Coleridge's "Table Talk," and note what he says of them. Hallam, while admitting that there was much to condemn in their indecency and even licentiousness of principle, says, "Never were dramatic poets more thoroughly gentlemen, according to the standard of their times." May our age be preserved from such gentility!

In his criticism on "Lycidas" occurs this sentence, which we beg our readers to compare with what he had said previously of the forest in the "Fairy Queen":—

"Such poems as 'Lycidas' are read with the willing abandonment of the imagination to a waking dream, and require only that general possibility, that combination of images, which common experience does not reject as incompatible!"

So that thus common experience is made the gauge of the poet's waking dreams. Alas! poor Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge, what is to become of your revolts of Islam, Hyperions, and Rimes of the Ancient Marinere, when tried by "common

experience," assisted in her assizes by the author of the "Constitutional History!"

In the next paragraph but one he tells us that the "Ode on the Nativity" is truly "Pindaric;" one of the most unlucky epithets ever applied. What resemblance there is between the swift, sharp-glancing, and fiery odes of the "inspired Olympic jockey," and that slow-moving, solemn strain of the English poet, we cannot even divine. In his account of "Paradise Lost," he assures us that the "subject is managed with admirable skill!" We rather like this *Perge Puer* style, this clapping on the back, from such a man as Henry Hallam to such a man as John Milton. It requires, too, a certain power and courage in a man to be able so gravely to enunciate such truisms as the above, and as the following:—"The Fall of Man has a more general interest than the Crusade." A little farther on, however, we are startled with what is neither a truism, nor even true. "The first two books confirm the sneer of Dryden, that Satan is Milton's hero, since they develop a plan of action in that potentate which is ultimately successful; the triumph which he and his host must experience in the fall of man being hardly compensated by their temporary conversion into serpents." As if that were the only compensation; as if the tenor of the whole argument were not to show that the second Adam was to bruise the Serpent's head by recovering the majority of the race from Satan's grasp, and by, at last, "consuming Satan and his perverted world." The object of Satan was not only to ruin man, but to rob God of glory; and the purpose of the poet is to show how neither part of the plan was successful, but that it all redounded to the devil's misery and disgrace, and to the triumph of God and of the Messiah. So that, if it be essential to the hero of an epic that he be victorious, Satan is not the hero of the "Paradise Lost," any more than of the "Paradise Regained," although he is undoubtedly the most interesting and powerfully-drawn character in the former.

Or what do our readers think of this?—"Except one circumstance, which seems rather physical intoxication than anything else, we do not find any sign of depravity superinduced upon the transgression of our first parents." Has Mr. Hallam forgotten that magnificent scene of their mutual recrimi-



nation, and of the gross injustice Adam does to Eve, by calling her "that bad woman," "that serpent," &c. ? . Was there no sign of begun depravity there? And was even "physical intoxication" possible to undepraved beings?

In the next paragraph he speaks of Homer's "diffuseness;" rather a novel charge, we wene. Of repetition he has often been accused, but never before of diffuseness. His lines are lances, as compressed as they are keen.

A few pages afterwards Hallam says:—"I scarcely think that he had begun his poem before the anxiety and trouble into which the public strife of the Commonwealth and the Restoration had thrown him, gave leisure for immortal occupations." Aubrey, on the contrary, expressly asserts that Milton began his great work two years before the Restoration. A fine sentence follows, in which the bust really seems nearly alive, and you cry, *O si sic omnia*, or even *multa*!—"Then the remembrance of early reading came over his dark and lonely path, like the moon emerging from the clouds." Then follows an attempt at antithesis, which seems to us extremely unsuccessful:—"Milton is more a musical than a picturesque poet. He describes visible things, but he feels music." What does this mean? or, at least, where is its force? Had he said, "He *is*," or "*becomes* music," it had been a novel and a beautiful thought. He then brings forward the old exploded objection to Milton's lists of sonorous names. Many have stated, but few, we hope, have ever felt this objection. To those possessed of historical lore, these names, as Macaulay remarks, are charmed names; to others they are like a foreign language spoken by a Gavazzi, or sung by a Jenny Lind—their music affects them almost as deeply as their meaning could. If jargon, they are at least the mighty jargon of a magician opening doors in rocks, rooting up pines, and making palaces and mountains come and go at his pleasure.

After somewhat underrating "Paradise Regained," he closes his estimate of Milton with a good account of "Samson Agonistes"—a poem, the "sculptural simplicity" of which seems to suit his taste better than the grandeurs of the "Paradise Lost," or the graces of the "Paradise Regained."

We could have gone on much longer, proving Hallam's

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incapacity as a critic of poets, but must at present stop. We have ventured on these remarks from no personal feeling to the author; in fact, although we have spoken of him as living, we are not sure but he is dead. To detract from his fame as a scholar and a historian, or rather critic on history, were a hopeless and an unjust attempt. But we are sorry to see powers so efficient in other fields worse than wasted upon the sides of Parnassus. To warn him and such as he off that sacred and secluded territory, we shall ever regard as our bounden duty.

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## NO. II.—JEFFREY AND COLERIDGE.

Our foregoing paper is on Hallam and Hazlitt. Our next is on two men who also constitute types of our two main modern schools of criticism—namely, the Mechanical and the Impulsive—although in both of them there are other elements blended: Jeffrey, much more than Hallam, having the genial playing above the hard surface of his mechanical judgment; and Coleridge, much more than Hazlitt, having a philosophical basis established below his impulsive eloquence of thought.

We first saw Lord Jeffrey at a meeting held in Edinburgh, to erect a monument to the memory of Sir Walter Scott, then recently deceased. After the poor Duke of Buccleuch, who acted as chairman, had delivered a silly speech in a hammering-stammering style (one of his best sentences was, "As to Scott's poetry, where was there *ever anything like that?*"), up rose our elegant, refined, little Law-Lord, and began in a shrill, sharp, yet tremulous tone, to panegyrisse the memory of his most formidable Scottish rival. His remarks were brief and in beautiful taste, especially when he spoke of men of all politics and classes having entered that hall, "as if into the Temple of the Deity," to perform an act of common and catholic homage to the virtues and genius of Sir Walter Scott. We were too distant to see his features distinctly, but shall never forget the impression made on us by his piercing rapid

tones, and by the mingled dexterity and dignity of the style of his address.

This was the first and last time of our hearing or seeing Jeffrey. But for years before we had been familiar with his fascinating articles in the "Edinburgh Review"—articles which now exert on us only the shadow of their original spell. Certainly more graceful and lively productions are not to be found in the compass of criticism; but in depth, power, width, and, above all, truth, they must take, on the whole, a secondary rank.

Lord Jeffrey had, unquestionably, many of the elements which unite to form a genuine critic. He had a subtle perception of a certain class of intellectual and literary beauties. He had a generous sympathy with many forms of genius. He had a keen logic with which to defend his views—a lively wit, a fine fancy, and a rapid, varied eloquence with which to expound and illustrate them. There was about his writing, too, a certain inimitable ease, which looked at first like carelessness, but which on closer inspection turned out to be the compounded result of high culture, much intercourse with the best society, and much practice in public speaking. His knowledge of law, too, had whetted his natural acuteness to a razor-like sharpness. His learning was not, perhaps, massive or profound; but his reading had been very extensive, and, retained in its entirety, became exceedingly serviceable to him in all his mental efforts. His genius possessed great versatility, and had been fed with very various provision, so that he was equally fitted to grapple with certain kinds of philosophy, and to discourse on certain schools of poetry, and was familiar alike with law, literature, metaphysics, and history. The moral spirit of his writings was that of a gentleman and man of the world, who was at all times ready to trample on meanness, and to resent every injury done to the common codes of honor, decency, generosity, and external morality.

Such is, we think, a somewhat comprehensive list of the good properties of Jeffrey as a critic. But he labored not less certainly under various important defects, which we proceed now with all candor to notice. He was not, in the first place, although a subtle and acute, a profound or comprehensive thinker. He saw the edges of a thought, but not a

thought in its length, depth, breadth, and in its relation to any great scheme of principles. Hence, with all his logical fence, and clear, rapid induction of particulars, he is often a shallow, and seldom a satisfactory thinker. He seems constantly, by a tentative process, seeking for his theories, seldom coming down upon them from the high summit of philosophical views. He has very few deep glimpses of truth, and scarcely any aphoristic sentences. His language, rhetoric, and fancy are often felt to be rich; his vein of thought seldom if ever—it is diffused in long strata, not concentrated into solid masses. He had no nuggets in his mines! Hence he is far from being a suggestive writer. Compare him in this respect with Burke, with Coleridge, with Foster! We are not blaming him for not having *been* one of these men; we are merely thus severely defining what we think the exact limits, and measuring the proper proportions, of his mind.

Although possessed of much and brilliant fancy, he had no high imagination, and therefore little true sympathy with it. The critic of the first poets must be himself potentially a poet. To *see* the sun, implies only eyes; but to *sing* the sun aright, implies a spark of his fire in the singer's soul. Jeffrey saw Milton, Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, and the writers of the Bible, but he could not sing their glories. Indeed, in reference to the first three and the last of these mighty poets, he has never, so far as we remember, uttered one word, or at least shown any thorough or profound appreciation of their power. Who quotes his panegyrics on Milton and Dante, if such things there be? Where has he spoken of Isaiah, David, or Job? Shakspeare, indeed, he has often and gracefully praised; but it is the myriad-minded in undress that he loves, and not as he is bound up to the full pitch of his transcendent genius—he likes him better as the Shakspeare of "Romeo," and the "Midsummer Night's Dream," than as the Shakspeare of "Macbeth," "Lear," and "Hamlet;" and his remarks, eloquent though they are, show no such knowledge of him as is manifested by Hazlitt, Coleridge, and Lamb. Almost all the great original poets of his own time he has either underrated, or attacked, or passed over in silence. Think of Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Shelley! Many of the best English writers of the past are treated with indifference or neglect. Burke

he only mentions once or twice. Johnson he sometimes sneers at, and sometimes patronises. To Swift as a writer he has done gross injustice. Sir Thomas Browne seems unknown to him. Young of the "Night Thoughts," Thomson, and Cowper, are all underrated. To Jeremy Taylor, indeed, he has given his due meed of praise, and to the early English dramatists much more than their due. And who, on the other hand, are his special favorites? Pope he admired for his brilliant wit and polish; Crabbe for his terseness and truth; Moore for his light and airy fancy; Campbell for his classic energy and national spirit; and Byron, not for the awful horn of blasphemy and creative power which rose late on his forehead in "Cain," "Heaven and Earth," and the "Vision of Judgment," but for his "Giaours" and "Corsairs," and the other clever centos of that imitative period of his poetical life. In praising these writers he was so far right, but he was not right in exalting them above their greater contemporaries; and the fact that he did so, simply shows that there was in his own mind a certain vital imaginative deficiency, disqualifying him from criticising the highest specimens of the art of poetry. What would we think of a critic on the fine arts, who should prefer Flaxman to Angelo, or Reynolds to Raphael, or Dauby to Leonard da Vinci?

In connection with this want of high imagination, there was in Jeffrey a want of abandonment and enthusiasm: of false enthusiasm he was incapable, although he was sometimes deceived by it in others. But the genuine child-like ardor which leads a man to clap his hands or to weep aloud as he sees some beautiful landscape, or reads some noble passage of poetry or prose, if it ever was in him, was early frozen up by the influences of the society with which he mingled in his early days. We disagree with Thomas Carlyle in many, and these very momentous, things—but we thoroughly agree with him in his judgment of the mischief which logic and speculation wrought upon the brains and hearts of the Scottish lawyers and literati about the end of last century and the beginning of this. We have heard of him saying, "that when in Edinburgh, if he had not thought there were some better people somewhere in the world than those he met with there, he would have gone away and hanged himself. The best he met were Whig lawyers, and

they believed in *nothing* except what they saw!' Among this class Jeffrey was reared, and it was no wonder that the wings of his enthusiasm, which were never of eagle breadth, were sadly curtailed. Indeed the marvel is, that they were not torn away by the roots, and that he *has* indited certain panegyrics on certain favorite authors, which, if cold, resemble at least cold cast, as we see sometimes in frost-work, into the form of fire.

What a propensity to sneer there was, especially in his earlier writings! Stab he could not—at least, in the dark. He left that Italian task to another and more malignant spirit, of whom this "world is not worthy," and who, maugre Jeffrey's kind interference to prevent him, often dipped his stiletto in poison—the poison of his own fierce passions. But Jeffrey's sneers were nearly as formidable as his coadjutor's stabs. They were so light, and apparently gentle! The sneer at a distance might almost have been mistaken for an infant smile; and yet how thoroughly it did its work! It was as though the shadow of poison could kill. It was fortunate that alike good sense and generosity taught him in general to reserve his power of sarcasm for those whom it might annoy and even check in popularity, but could not harm in person or in purse. Jeffrey flew at noble game—at Scott, and Southey, and Wordsworth. This doubtless was done in part from the levity and persiflage characteristic of an aspiring Edinburgh youth.—Truly does the writer quoted in the last paragraph say, that there is "a certain age when all young men should be clapped into barrels, and so kept till they come to years of discretion"—so intolerable is their conceit, and so absurd their projects and hopes—especially when to a large quantum of impudence and a minimum of true enthusiasm they add only that "little learning" which is so common and so dangerous a thing in this our day. Jeffrey, although rising ineffably above the wretched young prigs and pretenders of his own or the present time, was seldom entirely free from the spirit of intellectual puppyism. There was a pertness about his general manner of writing. Amazingly clever, adroit, subtle—he always gave you the impression of smallness; and you fancied that you saw Wordsworth, while still smarting under his arrows, lifting him up in his hand, as did Gulliver a Lilliputian, and admir-

ing the finished proportions of his tiny antagonist. And yet how, with his needle-like missiles, did he shed round pain and consternation upon the mightiest of the land! How did James Montgomery, and William Godwin, and Coleridge, and Lamb, and Southey, and a hundred more of mark and likelihood, groan like the wounded Cyclops—and how they reeled and staggered when they felt themselves blinded by weapons which they despised, and victimised by an enemy they previously could hardly see!

Latterly, indeed, we notice in Jeffrey's style less of the mannikin, and more of the man—less of the captious criticaster, and more of the large-minded judge. His paper on Byron's Tragedies is a specimen of his better manner, being bold and masculine; and it does not seem, like many of his articles, as if it should have been written on a watch-paper. In treating Warburton, too, he gets up on tiptoe, in sympathy with the bulky bishop; nor does he lose either his dignity or balance in the effort. But his attack on Swift is by far his most powerful review. We demur to his estimate of his talents as a writer. Swift could have swallowed a hundred Jeffreys. His power was simple and strong, as one of the energies of Nature. He did by the moving of his finger what others could not by the straining and agitation of their whole frame. It was a stripped, concentrated, irresistible force which dwelt in him—fed, too, by unutterable misery; and hence his power, and hence his pollution. He was strong, naked, coarse, savage, and mud-loving, as one of the huge primeval creatures of chaos. Jeffrey's sense of polish, feeling of elegance and propriety, consciousness of inferiority in most things, and consciousness of superiority in some, all contributed to rouse his ire at Swift; and, unequal as on the whole the match was, the clever Scotchman beat the monster Paddy. One is reminded of Gulliver's contest with some of the gigantic reptiles and wasps of Brobdignag. Armed with his hanger, that redoubtable traveler made them resile, or sent them wounded away. And thus the memory of Swift bears Jeffrey's steel-mark on it, and shall bear it for ever.

And yet, although Jeffrey was capable of high moral indignation, he appears to have had very little religious susceptibility. He was one of those who seem never either to have

heartily hated or heartily loved religion. He had thought on the subject; but only as he had thought on the guilt of Mary Queen of Scots—as an interesting historical puzzle, and not as a question deeply affecting his own heart and personal interests. We find in his writings no sympathy with the high heroic faith, the dauntless resistance, and the long-continued sufferings of the religious confessors and Covenanters of his own country. He could lay indeed a withering touch on their enemies; but them he passed by in silence, or acknowledged only by sneers. In this respect, however, as well as in his literary tone and temper, we notice a decided improvement in his latter days. He who, in an early number of the “Edinburgh Review,” applied a dancing-master standard to brawny Burns, and would have shorn and scented him down to the standard of Edinburgh modish life, in a diary written a little before his death, calls him a “glorious being,” and wishes he had been contemporary with him, that he might have called at his Dumfries hovel, and comforted his unhappy spirit. And he who had sneered, times and ways without number, at Scottish Presbyterian religion, actually shed tears when he saw the Free Church party leaving the General Assembly to cast themselves on the Voluntary Principle; and said that no country but Scotland could have exhibited a spectacle so morally sublime. In both these respects, indeed, latterly, the re-action becomes so complete as to be rather ludicrous than edifying. Think of how, in his letters, he deals with Dickens; how he kisses and fondles him as a lady does her lap-dog; how he weeps instead of laughing over those miserable Christmas tales of his; how he seems to believe a pug of genius to be a very lion! How different had Dickens’s worse productions appeared in the earlier part of Jeffrey’s critical career! As to religion, his tone becomes that of childish sentimentalism; and, unable to the last to give either to the Bible or to the existence of God the homage of a manly belief, he can yet shed over them floods of silly and senile tears.

Yet let him have his praise, as one of the acutest, most fluent, lively, and on the whole amiable, of our modern Scottish celebrities; although not, as Cockburn calls him in that lamentable life of his, at which the public have scarcely yet ceased to laugh, “the first of British critics!!!” His fame,



except in Edinburgh, is fast dwindling away; and although some passages in his writings may long be quoted, his memory is sure of preservation, chiefly from the connection of his name with that of the "Edinburgh Review," and with those powerful but uncertain influences in literature, politics, philosophy, and religion, which that review once wielded.

Coleridge was a man of another order. Indeed, we are half tempted to unite with De Quincey in calling him the "largest and most spacious intellect that has hitherto existed among men." All men, of course, compared with God, are fragments. Shakspeare himself was, and so was Coleridge. But, of all men of his time (Goethe not excepted), Coleridge approached nearest to our conception of a whole; and it was his own fault principally that he did not approach to this as nearly as Shakspeare. He had, as he boasted of himself, "energie reason and a shaping mind." He had imagination, intellect, reason, logic, fancy, and a hundred other faculties, all developed in nearly equal proportions, and all cultivated to nearly the same degree. He had, besides, a high and solemn sense of God, and a firm belief in his personality. Such powers were united with all the mechanical gifts of language and musical utterance, which tend to make them influential on the general public, and with a fine bodily constitution. What then was wanting to this new Adam, thus endowed in the prodigality of heaven? Only two things—a will and a wife—or, more properly speaking, one—a wife who could have become a will to him, and who could have led him to labor, regularity, and virtue. No such blessing was conferred on poor Coleridge. His "pensive Sara" failed, without any positive fault on her side, but from mere non-adaptation, in managing her gifted lord. And thus, left to his own rudderless impulses, he drifted on in a half-drunken dream, till he neared the rocks of ruin; and only at the call of Cottle and Southey turned round, in time to save a fraction of his intellect, of his character, and of his peace. Infinite and eternal regrets must hover above the record which tells of the history of Coleridge; the more as he neither fully went down, nor fully escaped the Maelstrom; in either of which cases, his fate had been more instructive and even less mysterious than it now is.

Yet we must here emphatically protest against Carlyle's re-

cent attempt to depreciate Coleridge. It is altogether unworthy of the author of the "Life of Schiller," although infinitely worthy of the author of the "Model Prisons"—that wretched inhumanity, which seemed like Swift's last ghastly grin gone astray, and re-appearing on the lips of Sartor.—Coleridge, it seems, had nothing but "beautiful philosophic moonshine." Better surely philosophic moonshine than "philosophic reek." Better try by moonshine to calm or brighten the jarring waves of this troubled age, than to darken them by a mist of jargon, or churn them into wilder fury by expletives of blasphemy. Coleridge, we admit, did not fully accomplish the task he undertook; but it *was* a task, and a task of heroic daring—better and nobler certainly than the act of lying down in the path of the world, and uttering howls of despair and furious invectives—invectives and exclamations which were endured for awhile, for the sake of their music and poetry; but which, having outlived that poetry and that music, are now very generally and justly regarded as the outcries of one who, naturally a noble being, has been partly soured and partly spoiled into something we can hardly venture to describe, except that it is rabidly hopeless, and hopelessly rabid. Alas! alas! for the Carlyle of 1829, when the article on Burns appeared—

"If thou beest he; but oh! how fallen, how changed!"

It is not our purpose to enter on the *mare magnum* of the Coleridgean question as a whole; but to speak simply and shortly of him in his critical function and faculty. That partook of the vast enlargement and varied culture of his mind. He arose at a time when criticism had fallen as low as poetry. Hayley was then the leading poet, and Blair the ruling critic! The "Edinburgh Review" had not risen, when a dark-haired man, "more fat than bard beseems," with ivory forehead, misty eye, boundless appetite for Welsh mutton, turnips, and flip, "talking like an angel, and doing nothing at all," commenced to talk and lecture on poetry all along the Bristol Channel—in Shropshire and in Shrewsbury, in Manchester and in Birmingham; and so new and striking were his views, and so eloquent his language, and so native his enthusiasm, that

all men's hearts burned within them as he spoke. He "threw," says Hazlitt, "a great stone into the torpid and stagnant waters of criticism." He set up Shakspeare above Pope; he praised Thomson and Cowper, as vastly superior to even Addison and Goldsmith; he magnified Collins over Gray; he asserted the immeasurable superiority of Burke to all his contemporaries; he turned attention to the ancient ballad poetry of Britain; and he pointed his finger toward the great orb of German genius which was then rising slowly, and amid heavy clouds, over the horizon of the British mind. He did more than this: he made his audiences for the first time hear poetry read, not with the disgusting tricks of such elocution as was then, and is still taught, but as poets should read it, and as lovers of poetry should desire it to be read. And the poetry he did read was sometimes *his own*—the fine fresh incense of his young enthusiasm and insight, colored by the hues of heaven as it ascended up on high.

The effect he produced was greatly increased afterwards, by the influences of a visit to Germany upon his mind and his eloquence. This, instead of deadening, simply directed the current of his enthusiasm. It made him a *wise* enthusiast.—He could now substantiate his statements, made at first from intuitions, by critical principles, which were, indeed, just intuitions grown old and established. He had greatly profited by reading Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller, and he set himself to translate them, in various ways, to his countrymen. It mattered not though his works did not circulate; *he* circulated, and wherever he went intellectual virtue went out of him. He scattered critical dust—and it was fire-dust—along his path; and such men as Lamb, and Hazlitt, and Southey, and De Quincey, and Lloyd, were ever ready to collect it, and to make it, and perhaps sometimes to call it, their own. For several years, in fact, the controversy of criticism amounted to a brisk fire between the "Edinburgh Review," stationary in the metropolis of Scotland, and S. T. Coleridge, wandering at his own will through merry England, from London to the Lakes, and from the Lakes to Bristol, or to London back again. At the outset, the "Review" had the advantage; but ultimately Coleridge, Wordsworth, and their party talked and wrote its criticism down—nay, best of all, converted the "Review" to their *side*, though never fully to *themselves*.

It is unfortunate that Coleridge has not condensed his criticism into any distinct system, or wrought it out into any series of critical papers. Hence we have only fragments, such as are scattered through his "Friend" and "Biographia Literaria," or found in his "Table Talk." From these, however, it is very easy to see the leading principles on which all his criticism proceeds. His two great principles were, first, the difference between the Imagination and the Fancy; and, secondly, the necessity of an organic unity to all the higher works of art. The first of these, although not, we think, just, led him to the strong distinction he perpetually draws between the *soi-disant* poetry of Pope, Addison, and Darwin; and that of Shakspeare, Milton, and the rest of our great poets. His inculcation of organic unity in works of genius is unquestionably pushed too far—so far, indeed, that on his principles there are only one or two poems, however many poets there may be, in the world. But it has done good, notwithstanding, in curbing that tendency to fragmentary and fugitive effort which has beset so many poets; and in opening their eyes to what is certainly the most difficult peak in the poetic art. Coleridge, too, has strongly insisted upon poets studying philosophy as the basis of their song—seeking to construct their verse and language upon scientific principles, and consecrating their gift to the Great Giver. Were poets acting on his advice, we should have every one of them ready to "give a reason" for the inspiration that was in him; and what is much better, all singing harmoniously with the harps of angels around the manger at Bethlehem and the empty grave of the Risen Redeemer. He has also attempted to distinguish the *differentia* of genius—finding the meaning of it in the name—which so closely connects it with the genial nature and the spontaneous powers—a distinction which De Quincey has recently borrowed, and illustrated with his usual felicity.

What a book the "Collected Criticisms of S. T. (alas not St.!) Coleridge" might have been, had he written a hundred papers like that he wrote about Sir T. Browne, on the blank leaf of one of his volumes! But a completed Coleridge had been too noble a product for us as yet—"a thing to dream of, not to see." It is a curious question—"Are such tantalising fragments finished in another world?" If so, how interesting

the spectacle of a mild-tempered Milton—a humble and bending Byron—a Shelley on his knees—a Goethe warmed into a seraph, and “summering high in bliss upon the hills of God”—a many-sided Southey—a wide-minded Wordsworth—a believing Godwin—a healthy and happy Keats—a holy Burns—a Poe “clothed and in his right mind”—a Coleridge with the crevices in his nature filled up, and his self-control made equal to his transcendent genius! Whether the future world may show us such rounded harmonies as our words have thus described we cannot tell; but certainly it is very pleasant to conceive of them as possible, and to form idealisms of the future of men, who, on this earth compassed about with infirmities, and even betrayed into deep and fatal errors, have yet forced their irresistible way into the admiration of our intellects, and the pity or love of our hearts.

### NO. III.—DELTA.\*

(*This paper appeared in August, 1851.*)

THE name, or rather the mark of  $\Delta$ , is a magic mark throughout the entire kingdom of British literature. The gentleman who chooses thus to subscribe himself is favorably known as a poet, as a writer on medical literature, as the author of a very successful Scotch novel, yclept “Mansie Wauch,” as one of the principal contributors and conductors of “Blackwood’s Magazine,” and as a most amiable and accomplished private person. Nor are we sure, if, all things considered, any man, whether in England or Scotland, could have been singled out, who was likely to manage the difficult and complicated subject of these lectures in a *safer*, a more candid, and less exceptionable style, than Dr. Moir—especially before an audience so constituted, that one-half came probably with the notion (however ludicrous this presumption may seem to all others) that

\* Sketches of the Poetical Literature of the Past Half-Century, delivered before the Edinburgh Philosophical Association, by DELTA.

any one of themselves might have treated the subject better than he!

But, apart altogether from the composition of his audience—peculiar and unique, we believe, in the world—Delta has nobly effected his purpose. That was to express honestly and in simple language, without shrinking, and without show, his *own* views and feelings as to our last half-century's poetical literature. And it is fortunate for us, and all his readers, that these are the views of no narrow sectarian, or soured bigot, or self-conceited and solemn twaddler—but of an enlightened, wide-minded, and warm-hearted man, whose very errors and mistakes are worthy of respectful treatment, and all of whose opinions are uttered from the sincerity of an honest heart, and in the eloquent and dignified language of a poet.

Had we a thousand pens, each should run on, like that of a "ready writer," in the praise of poetry. Assuredly, among the many sweets which God has infused into the cup of being among the many solaces of this life, the many relics of the primeval past, the many foretastes of the glorious future, there are few more delicious than the influences of poetry. It transports us from the dust and discord of the present troubled sphere into its own fair world. It "lays us," as Hazlitt beautifully says, "in the lap of a lovelier nature, by stiller streams, and fairer meadows;" it invigorates the intellect by the elevated truth which is its substance; it enriches the imagination by the beauty of its pictures; it enlarges the mental view by the width and grandeur of its references; it inflames the affections by the "touch ethereal of its fiery rod;" it purifies the morals by the powers of pity and terror; and, when concentrated and hallowed, it becomes the most beautiful handmaid in the train of faith, and may be seen with graceful attitude sprinkling the waters of Castalia on the roses in the garden of God. The pleasures which poetry gives are as pure as they are exquisite. Like the manna of old, they seem to descend from a loftier climate—not of the earth, earthy, but of celestial birth, they point back to heaven as their future and final home. They bear every reflection, and they awaken no re-action. A night with the Muses never produces a morning with the Fiends. The world

into which poetry introduces is always the same. The "Sun of Homer shines upon us still." The meadows of genius are for ever fresh and green. The skies of imagination continually smile. The actual world changes—the ideal is always one and the same—Achilles is always strong—Helen is always fair—Mount Ida continually cleaves the clouds—Scamander rushes ever by—the Eve of Milton still stands ankle deep in the flowers of her garden—and the horn of Fitzjames winds in the gorge of the Trosachs for evermore. And when we remember that above the storms and surges of this tempestuous world there rises in the pages of the poet a fairy realm, which he who reads may reach, and straightway forget his sorrow, and remember his poverty no more, we see the debt of gratitude we owe to poetry, and, looking at the perennial peace and loveliness which surround her wherever she goes, we feel entitled to apply to her the beautiful lines originally addressed to the bird of spring—

" Sweet bird, thy bower is ever fair  
Thy sky is ever clear;  
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,  
No winter in thy year."

Love—pure, refined, insatiable affection—for the beautiful forms of this material universe, for the beautiful affections of the human soul, for the beautiful passages of the history of the past, for the beautiful prospects which expand before us in the future—such love burning to passion, attired in imagery, and speaking in music, is the essence and the soul of poetry. It is this which makes personification the life of poetry. The poet looks upon nature, not with the philosopher, as composed of certain abstractions, certain "cold material laws;" but he breathes upon them, and they quicken into personal life, and become objects as it were of personal attachment. The winds with him are not cold currents of air, they are messengers, they are couriers—the messengers of destiny, the couriers of God; the rainbow is not a mere prismatic effect of light; but to the poet, in the language of the Son of Sirach, "it encompasseth the heavens with a glorious circle, and the hands of the Most High have bended it." The lightning is not simply an electric discharge, it is a barbed arrow of ven-

geance, it is winged with death; the thunder is not so much an elemental uproar, as it is the voice of God; the stars are not so much distant worlds, as they are eyes looking down on men with intelligence, sympathy, and love; the ocean is not a dead mass of waters, it is a "glorious mirror to the Almighty's form;" the sky is not to the poet a "foul and pestilent congregation of vapors," it is a magnificent canopy "fretted with golden fire," nay, to his anointed eye every blade of grass lives, every flower has its sentiment, every tree its moral, and

"Visions, as poetic eyes avow,  
Hang in each leaf, and cling to every bough."

This perpetual personification springs from that principle of love which teaches the poet not only to regard all men as his brethren, the whole earth as his home, but to throw his own excess of soul into dumb, deaf, and dead things, and to find even in them subjects of his sympathy, and candidates for his regard. It was in this spirit that poor Burns did not disdain to address the mouse running from his ploughshare as his "fellow-mortal," and bespeak even the ill-fated daisy, which the same ploughshare destroyed—say rather transplanted into the garden of never-dying song—

"Wee, modest, crimson-tippit flower,  
Thou'st met me in an evil hour,  
And I maun crush below the stoure  
Thy feeble stem;  
To spare thee noo is past my power,  
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,  
The blithesome lark, companion meet,  
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weat,  
Wi' speckled breast,  
While upward springing, blithe to greet  
The purpling East."

Nor, so long as love and the personifying principle springing from it exist, are we afraid for the decline or fall of poetry. Dr. Moir, we humbly conceive, has a morbid and needless horror at the progress of science; he speaks with a sort of timid hope of "poetry ultimately recovering from the staggering blows which science has inflicted, in the shape of steam conveyance, of electro-magnetism, of geological exposition, of political economy, of statistics—in fact, by a series



of disenchantments, original genius, in due time must from new elements frame new combinations, and these may be at least what the kaleidoscope is to the rainbow, or an explosion of hydrogen in the gasometer to a flash of lightning on the hills. But this alters not my position—that all facts are prose until colored by imagination or passion. From physic we have swept away alchemy, incantation, and cure by the royal touch; from divinity, exorcism, and *purgatory*, and excommunication; and from law, the trial by wager of battle, the ordeal by touch, and the mysterious confessions of witchcraft. In the foamy seas we can never more expect to see Proteus leading out his flocks; nor in the dimpling stream another Narcissus admiring his own fair face; nor Diana again descending on Latmos to Endymion. We cannot hope another Una ‘making a sunshine in the shady place;’ nor another Macbeth meeting with other witches on the blasted heath; nor another Faust wandering amid the mysterious sights and sounds of another May-day night. Robin Hoods and Rob Roys are incompatible with sheriffs and the county police; rocks are stratified by geologists exactly as satins are measured by mercers; and Echo, no longer a vagrant classical nymph, is compelled quietly to succumb to the laws of acoustics.”

He says again, “Exactness of knowledge is a barrier to the laying on of that coloring by which alone facts can be invested with the illusive lines of poetry.” And again, he defines “poetry the imaginative and limitless, and science the definite and true;” and says, “Poetry has ever found ‘the haunt and the main region of her song’ either in the grace and beauty which cannot be analysed, or in the sublime of the indefinite. Newton with his dissection of the rainbow, Anson with his circumnavigation of the earth, and Franklin with his lightning-kite, were all disenchanters. Angels no longer alight on the iris; Milton’s sea-covered sea—sea without shore—is a geographical untruth; and in the thunder men no more hear the voice of the Deity.”

Thus far, Delta—and very beautiful and ingenious these illustrations are. But, first, many of the things he mentions, although banished from the province of belief, are not thereby banished from that of poetry, or of that quasi-belief which

good poetry produces. Milton, not Milton's age, believed in the Heathen Mythology; and yet how beautifully has he made it subserve poetical purposes. Scott had no faith in ghosts or witchcraft, or the second sight, and yet he has turned them to noble imaginative account; and when he speaks of the second sight as being now "abandoned to the purposes of poetry," he truly describes a common process, the fact of which is fatal to Delta's theory—a process through which sublime and beautiful illusions of all kinds, cast out of man's understanding, take refuge in his imagination, and become a rich stock of materials for the poet. Godwin, too, did not believe in alchemy, and yet he has founded a magnificent prose poem upon an alchemist's imaginary story.

Nay, secondly, the further we advance beyond the point of believing such illusions, their poetic value and power are often enhanced. An English boy, we venture to say, reads the "Arabian Nights" with more generous gusto, with more intense delight, than did ever a boy in Bagdad. What comparison between all the ancient minstrels put together, and the minstrel lays or minstrel prose of Scott, who wrote in the nineteenth century? What grey primeval father ever felt, or could ever have expressed, the beauty of the feeling for the rainbow as Campbell has done? And did not John Keats—a Cockney youth—breathe a new poetic spirit into the pagan Mythos, and throne its gods in statelier and more starry mansions than Homer or Æschylus themselves? Not only is a "thing of beauty a joy for ever," but its beauty swells and deepens with time. All those illusions to which Delta so eloquently refers—in medicine, law, and physics—although thrust forth from the inner shrine of truth, linger on, in their highest ideal shapes, in the beautiful porch of poetry. There stands still the Alchemist, the smoke of his great sacrifice to nature still crossing his countenance, and giving a mystic wildness to his aspect; there the Witch still mutters her spell, and thickens her infernal broth; there the Ghost disturbed tells, as he walks with troubled steps, the secrets of his prison-house, his own shadowy hair on end in its immortal horror; there the Marinere, returned from a far countrie, speaks of antres vast and deserts idle—of spectre ships sailing upon windless oceans—of spirits sitting amid the shrouds at midnight—of double

suns and bloody rainbows; there Scheherezade continues her ever-wondrous and ever-widening tale; there still twangs the bow of Robin Hood, and wave the feathers of Rob Roy; there, as the Earthquake at times shakes the ground, it seems the spasm of an imprisoned giant; as a sunbeam of peculiar beauty slants in, Uriel is seen descending upon it; and as the thunder utters its tremendous monotony, there are still voices ready to exclaim, "God hath spoken once, yea, twice have I heard this, Power belongeth unto God." Still to fancy and to feeling—to imagination's quick ear, and to passion's burning heart—"all things are possible."

Thirdly, Delta, we think, unduly restricts the domain of poetry, when he strikes out from its map the provinces of the definite and the true. We grant that often poetry loves to wear a robe of moonlight, and a scarf of mist, as she walks along in her beauty. But there is also a severe, purged, and lofty poetry which delights in the naked light of truth—the clear shining of a morning without clouds. Such was the poetry of Homer, of Chaucer, of Crabbe, and many others. Such is the principal part of what is called didactic poetry. Such poetry, too, is found in abundance in Scripture, and has obtained from critics the name of Gnostic, or Sententious song. Now, it is certain that the advance of definite knowledge must tend to the perfectionment of this species of poetry, since it loves to deal with direct facts, definite propositions, and the higher of the works of art.

Fourthly, Delta omits to notice, that while some of those indefinitudes and sublimities in which poetry has often hitherto delighted to revel, may yield before advancing science and civilisation, others, of perhaps a grander cast, shall take their room. He is aware that in ancient demonology, next, or even superior, as an hour for starting a spirit to the noon of night, was the *noon of day*. We are at present in a transition state. The sun of science has risen, but has not reached his meridian. Consequently, the poetry of science, or of philosophy, has not fully arrived. But arrive it shall, in due time, and in our notion must be of a far higher cast than the poetry of superstition—beautiful as that was, is, and must continue to be. Lucretius was in the rear of Epicurus—Milton after Luther—and Scott after Chivalry. We must wait for the advent of

those poets who shall set to song the great discoveries and philosophies of our day. Nay, even at present, we can detect the germs of poetry in our advancing knowledge. "The heavens," says Hazlitt, "have gone farther off." Strange, indeed, if the telescope has pushed them away! Surely, if the "cusps" of the "houses" of astrology have left us, the constellations and firmaments of the universe have come nearer. "There shall never be another Jacob's Dream." Never—for we have now a "more sure word of prophecy," and "new heavens" are coming! We, for our parts, venture to hope that the "witching time" of *noon* is near. "Poetry," says one, "shall lead in a new age, even as there is a star in the constellation Harp which shall yet, astronomers tell us, be the polar star for a thousand years." May we not be fast nearing that star? All the sciences are already employed, and may yet be more solemnly enlisted into the service of poetic song. Botany shall go forth into the fields and the woods, collect her fairest flowers, and bind them with a chaplet for the brow of Poetry. Conchology from the waters, and from the ocean shores, shall gather her loveliest shells, and hark! when uplifted to the ear of Poetry,

"Pleased they remember their august abodes,  
And murmur as the ocean murmurs there."

As Anatomy continues to lay bare the human frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made, Poetry shall breathe upon the "dry bones," and they shall live. Chemistry shall lead Poetry to the side of her furnace, and show her transformations scarcely less marvellous and magical than her own. Geology, with bold yet trembling hand, lifting up the veil from the history of past worlds—from cycles of ruin and of renovation—shall allow the eye of Poetry to look down in wonder, and to look up in fire. And Astronomy shall conduct Poetry to her observatory, and mingle her own joy with *hers*, as they behold the spectacle of that storm of suns, which is blowing in the midnight sky. In the prospect of the progress of this last science, indeed, we see opening up the loftiest of conceivable fields for the poet. Who has hitherto adequately sung the wonders of the Newtonian—how much less of the Herschelian heavens! And who is waiting, with his lyre in his hands, to

praise the steep-rising splendors of the Rossian skies? We have the "Night Thoughts"—a noble strain, but a whole century behind the present stage of the science; but who shall write us a poem on "Night" worthy, in some measure, of the solemn yet spirit-stirring theme? Sooner or later it must be done. The Milton of Midnight must yet arrive.

Coleridge somewhere profoundly remarks, that all knowledge begins with wonder, passes through an interspace of admiration mixed with research, and ends in wonder again. Now what is true of knowledge is true of poetry. She, too, begins with wonder; and from this feeling have sprung her first rude and stuttering strains. Admiration, culture, the artistic *use* of the wonders of the past succeed, and to this stage we have now come. But we may yet rise, and that speedily, to a higher and almost ideal height, when the stationary unutterable wonder of the first poetic age shall be superadded to the admiration and art of the second, and when the new and perfect poetry shall include both. The infant, abashed at some great spectacle, covers his face with his little hands; the man stands erect, with curious kindling eye before it; the true philosopher imitates the attitude of the angels, who, nobler infants, "veil their faces with their wings." So poetry at first prattles bashfully, it then admires learnedly, and at last it bends, yet burns, in seraphic homage.

Visions go, but truths succeed or remain. The rainbow ceases to be the bridge of angels, but not to be the prism of God. The thunder is no longer the voice of capricious and new kindled wrath, but is it not still the echo of conscience? and does it not speak to all the higher principles in the human soul? The stars are no longer the geographical limits or guides of man's history; but are they not now milestones in the city not made with hands—the city of God? The universe has lost those imaginary shapes or forms by which men of old sought to define and bound it; but it has, instead, stretched away indefinitely, and *become* that "sea without shore" of which Milton dreamed. The Genii imagined to preside over the Elements have vanished; but, instead of them, the Elements themselves have gained a mystic importance, and sit in state upon their secret thrones, till some new one power, perhaps, rises to displace and include them all.

The car of Neptune scours the deep no more; but there is, instead, the great steam-vessel walking the calm waters in triumphant beauty, or else wrestling like a demon of kindred power, with the angry billows. Apollo and the Muses are gone; but in their room there stands the illimitable, undefinable thing called Genius—the electricity of the intellect—the divinest element in the mind of man. Newton “dissected the rainbow,” but left it the rainbow still. Anson “circumnavigated the earth,” but it still wheels round the sun, blots out at times the moon, and carries a Hell of cavernd mysterious fire in its breast. Franklin brought down the lightnings on his kite; but, although they said to him, “Here we are,” they did not tell him, “This or that are we.” In short, beauty, power, all the poetical influences and elements, retire continually before us like the horizon, and the end and the place of them are equally and for ever unknown.

Delta is, as all who are acquainted with him know, a man of genuine, though unobtrusive, piety. Every line of his poetry proves him a Christian. And it is on this account that we venture to ask him, in fine, how will this theory of his consort with the doctrine of man’s immortal progress? how account for the ever-welling poetry of the “New Song?” and how explain the attitude of those beings who, knowing God best, admire him the most, praise him most vehemently, and pour out before him the richest incense of wonder and worship? *Here* is poetry surviving amid the very blaze of celestial vision; and surely we need not expect that any stage of mental advancement *on earth* can ever see its permanent decline or decay.

If we have dwelt rather long upon this point, it is partly because we count it a question of considerable moment; because we think Delta’s notion in reference to it is pushed forward somewhat prominently, and more than once, and because it is one of the few theories in the book which, while it has a general character, is susceptible of special objections. We have indeed still one or two of his minor statements to combat. But we pass, first, with sincere gratification, to speak of the main merits of his book.

The most prominent, perhaps, of these, is Catholicity. He is a generous, as well as a just, judge. He has looked over

the poetry of the last fifty years with an eye of wise love. Finding two schools in our literature, which, after a partial and hollow truce, are gradually diverging, if not on the point of breaking out, into open hostility, he has, in some measure, acted as a mediator between them. Not concealing his peculiar favor for the one, he is yet candid and eloquent in his appreciation of the demi-gods of the other. Adoring Scott, he is just to Shelley. He sees the fire mingled with mysticism, "like tongues of flame amid the smoke of a conflagration;" but he greatly prefers the swept hearth and the purged, clear, columnar flames of the ancient Homeric manner. Inclining to what he thinks the more excellent way, he does not denounce as a dunce or an impostor every one who has chosen, or who encourages others in choosing, another and a more perilous style. The energy and beauty of his praise show, moreover, its sincerity. False or ignorant panegyric may easily be detected. It is clumsy, careless, and fulsome; it often praises writers for qualities they possess not, or it singles out their faults for beauties, or by overdoing, overleaps itself, and falls on the other side. It now gives black eyes to the Saxon, and now fair hair to the Italian—commends Milton for his equality, Dryden for his imagination, Pope for his nature, and Byron for his truth. Very different with honest praise. It shows, first, by the stroke of a moment, the man it means, and after drawing a strong and hard outline of his general character, it makes the finer and warmer shades flush over it gently and swiftly, as the vivid green of spring passes over the fields. And such always, or generally, is the distinct, yet imaginative, the clear and eloquent praise of Delta.

He goes to criticise, too, in the spirit of a poet. Prosaic criticism of poetry is a nuisance which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear. A drunkard cursing the moon—a maniac foaming at some magnificent statue, which stands serene and safe above his reach—or a ruffian crushing roses on his way to midnight plunder, is but a type of the sad work which a clever, but heartless and unimaginative, critic often makes of works of genius. Nay, there is a class, less despicable, but more pernicious, who make their moods and states play the critic—now the moods of their mind, and now the states of their stomach, the verdicts of which, neverthe-

less, issued in cold, oracular print, are received by the public as veracious. There is a set, again, whose criticisms are formed upon the disgustingly dishonest principle of picking out all the faults, and ignoring all the beauties, of a composition; and who do not give the faults even the poor advantage of showing them in their context. And there are those who judge of books by their publisher, or by the nation of their author, or by his profession, or by his reputed creed. It were certainly contemptible to allude to the existence of such reptiles at all, were it not that they are permitted to crawl in some popular periodicals; that they shelter under, and abuse the shade of the "Anonymous;" and that they have prevailed to retard the wider circulation of the writings, without being able to check the spread of the fame, of some of the most gifted of our living men. To take one out of many cases, we simply ask the question, Have some of our leading London journals ever taken the slightest notice of any one of the works of perhaps the most eloquent and powerful genius at present alive in Britain—we mean Professor Wilson? And if this has been little loss to him, has it been less a disgrace to them? Delta is altogether a man of another spirit. He is at once a poet and a gentleman; and how fortunate were many of our critics, could he transfer even the lesser half of this fine whole to them! His genial enthusiasm never, or seldom, blinds his discriminating eyesight. And throughout all this volume he has praised very few indeed who have not, in some field or another of poetry, eminently distinguished themselves.

We mention again the wide knowledge of the poetry of the period which his lectures display. This bursts out, as it were, at every pore of the book. There is no appearance of cramming for his task, although here and there he does allude to writers who have either, *per se*, or *per alios*, been thrust into the field of his view. We notice, however, that he has made one or two important omissions. His silence as to Sydney Yendys, was, we understand, an oversight. The slip containing a criticism of "The Roman," accidentally *slipped* out as the printing was going on. It was the same with a notice of Taylor's "Eve of the Conquest." Other blanks there are, but, on the whole, when we consider the width of the field he has traversed, the marvel is that they are so few.



We have a more serious objection to state. It is with regard to the scale he has (in effect, though indirectly) constructed of our poets. Scott he sets "alone and above all;" then he places Wordsworth, Byron, Wilson, and Coleridge, on one level—Campbell, Southey, James Montgomery, Moore, and Crabbe, seem to stand in the next file; then come Pollok, Aird, Croly, and Milman; then Keats, Shelley, and Tennyson; and, in fine, the *οἱ πολλοί*, the minor, or rising poets. Delta will pardon us if we have mistaken his meaning, but this has been the impression left on us by the perusal of his lectures. Now, admitting that Scott, in breadth, variety, health, dramatic and descriptive powers, was the finest writer of his age, yet surely he is not to be compared *as a poet* with many others of the time; nor as a profound thinker and consummate artist, with such men as Wordsworth and Coleridge. As a *VATES*, what proportion between him and Shelley, Keats and Byron? In terseness and true vigor, he yields to Crabbe; and in lyrical eloquence and fire, to Campbell. Wilson, as a man of general genius and Shakspearian all-sidedness, is inferior to few men of any age; but, as a *poet*, as an *artist*, as a *writer*, has done nothing entitling him to rank with Byron, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. Campbell and Crabbe are commensurate names, but they rank as poets much more highly above Southey and Montgomery than Delta seems willing to admit. And, greatly as we admire Croly, Aird, and Pollok, we are forced to set Keats and Shelley above them in point of richness and power of genius, as well as of artistic capacity.

Delta, in his capacity of poet, is not uniformly national; but, as a critic, his heart beats most warmly, and his language flows out with most enthusiasm and fluency, toward the poets of Scotland. He has mingled with some of the noblest of English spirits too; may, for aught we know, have climbed Helvellyn with Wordsworth; has, at any rate, "seated at Coleridge's bedside at Hampstead, heard him recite the "Monody" to Chatterton, in tones "delicate, yet deep, and long drawn out;" but he has evidently been on terms of more foud and familiar intercourse with the bards of his own country. He has sat occasionally at the "Noctes Ambrosianæ," has frequently walked with Aird through the sweet gardens of Duddingston, listened to Wilson sounding on his way as they

scaled Arthur's Seat together, or to Hogg repeating "Kilmenny," mingled souls with poor William Motherwell, and crossed pipes with Dr. Macnish, the Modern Pythagorean has read the "Course of Time" in MS., and now and then seen Abbotsford in its glory, while the white peak of the wizard's head was still shiving amid its young plantations. Hence a little natural exaggeration in speaking of the men and the subjects he knows best—an exaggeration honorable to his heart, not dishonorable to his head, and which does not detract much from the value of his estimates; nay, it has enabled him, in reference to Scottish genius, to write with a fine combination of generous ardor, and of perfect mastery. Cordially do we unite with him in condemning the gross affectations, the deliberate darkness, the foul smoke, and, above all, the assumption, exclusiveness, and conceit, which distinguish the writings of our minor mystics; and we have already granted that he is just in his estimate of the genius of many of the higher members of the school, and sincere in his desire to produce a reconciliation between them and their more lucid and classical brethren. Still we could have wished that he had entered more systematically and profoundly into the points of difference between the two schools, and the important æsthetical questions which are staked upon their resolution. He might, for instance, have traced the origin of mystical poetry to the fact that there are in poetry as well as in philosophy, things hard to be understood, words unutterable, yet pressing against the poet's brain for utterance; have shown that the expression given to such things should be as clear and simple as possible; that the *known* should never be passed off for the *unknown* under a disguise of words (even as a full might be mistaken for a crescent moon, behind a cloud sufficiently thick), that a mere ambitious desire to utter the unknown should never be confounded with a real knowledge of any of its mysterious provinces; that as no system of mystical philosophy is, as yet, complete, so it has never yet been the inspiration of a truly great and solid poem, although it has produced many beautiful fragments—that fragments are in the meantime the appropriate tongue of the mystical, as certainly as that there is no encyclopedia written in Sanscrit, and no continent composed of aerolites—that even great genius, such as Shelley's

in the "Prometheus," has failed in building up a long and lofty poem upon a mystical plan—that alone, of British men in this age, Coleridge so thoroughly comprehended the transcendental system, as to have been able to write its epic, which he has *not* done—that much of the oracular poetry of the day is oracular nonsense, the spawn of undigested learning, or the stuff of morbid dreams—that the day for great mystical poems may yet come, but that meanwhile we are tempted to quote Dr. Johnson's language (whose *spontaneous* and *sincere* sayings, by the way, are seldom if ever mistaken), in reference to William Law, and to apply it to our Brownings, Herauds, Patmores, &c. "Law fell latterly into the reveries of Jacob Behmen, whom he alleged to have been in the same state with St. Paul, and to have seen *unutterable things*; but, were it even so, Jacob would have resembled St. Paul still more, by *not attempting to utter them*."

Chaos, no doubt, in its successive stages, was a poem, but it was not till it became creation that it was said of it, "It is very good." So often the crude confusions, the half-delivered thoughts, the gasping utterances of a true poet of this mystical form, have a grandeur and an interest in them, but they rather tantalise than satisfy; and when they pretend to completeness and poetic harmony, they are felt to insult as well as tantalise.

So far as Delta has erred on this subject, it is in that he has decried mystic poetry *per se*, and has not restricted himself to the particular and plentiful examples around him of bad and weak poetry "hiding itself, because it was afraid," among trees or clouds—intricacies of verse or perplexities of diction. But, even as from science advancing towards its ideal there may be expected to arise a severe and powerful song, so, when man becomes more conversant with the mysteries of his own spiritual being—more at home in those depths within him, which angels cannot see—and after he has formed a more consistent and complete theory of himself, his position in the universe, his relation to the lower animals and to the creation, his relations in society and to God—after, in one word, what is now called mysticism has become a clear and mighty tree, rising from darkness and clothing itself with day as with a garment, then may it not become musical with a sweet, a full,

and a far-resounding poetry, to which  $\Delta$  himself, notwithstanding all the characteristic *triangular* sharpness of his intellectual perceptions, would listen well pleased? It is this hope alone which sustains us, as we see the new gaining so rapidly upon the old, in the domain not only of thought but of poetry. The pseudo-transcendental must give place to the true.

It may indeed be said, "But will not thus much of what is indefinite—and, therefore, the fairy food of our poetic bees—disappear?" We answer, as we have replied before in reference to science, Yes, but only to be replaced by a more ethereal fare. The indefinite will be succeeded by other and other shapes of that *infinitude* which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. And, however perfect our future systems may be, there will always appear along their outlines a little mist, to testify that other fields and still grander generalisations lie within and beyond it.

Our space is now nearly exhausted, otherwise we had something more to say about these lectures and their author. The faults we have had occasion to mention, and others we might name, have sprung from no defect of capacity or taste, but partly from the accident of his local habitation, partly from the generous kindness of his heart—a noble fault, and principally from the false position he and all are compelled to assume, who enter on that grand arena of mutual deception and graceful imposture called the lecture-room. Having felt long ago, by experience and by observation, what grave *lies* lectures generally are, what poor creatures even men of genius and high talents often become ere they can succeed in lecturing, and how we yet want a name that can adequately discriminate or vividly describe the personage who feels himself at home on a lecture platform, we were abundantly prepared, by the words "six lectures," to expect a certain quantity of clap-trap, and are delighted to find that in the book there is so little. We rejoice to see, by the way, from a recent glance at that repertory of wit and wisdom—Boswell's "Johnson"—that old Samuel entertained the same opinion with us of the inutility of lectures, and their inferiority to books as a means of popular education; and that, too, many years ere they had become the standing article of disgust and necessary nuisance which they seem now to be.

But, instead of dwelling on Delta's faults, or quoting any of the eloquent and beautiful passages in which his lectures abound, we close by calling on our readers to peruse for themselves. His book is not only worthy of his reputation, but is really one of the heartiest, sincerest, and most delightful works of criticism we have read for many a long year.

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We almost tremble now to begin a criticism on any advanced and long-known author. While we were writing a recent paper on Joanna Baillie, the news arrived of her death. While expecting the proof of the above article on "Delta," the melancholy tidings of his sudden decease reached us. Shall we say, in the language of Lalla Rookh,

"I never rear'd a fair gazelle,  
To glad me with her soft black eye,  
But when it came to know me well,  
And love me, it was sure to die?"

About two months ago, the lamented dead opened up a communication with us, which promised to ripen into a long and friendly correspondence. *Dis aliter visum est.* Delta the Delightful is no more. On a visit in search of health, he reached Dumfries, a town dear to him on many accounts, and principally because there sojourned a kindred spirit—Thomas Aird—one of his oldest and fastest friends. On the evening of Thursday, the 3d of July, as the amiable and gifted twain were walking along the banks of the Nith, Delta was suddenly seized with a renewal of his complaint—peritonitis—a peculiar kind of inflammation, and it was with great difficulty that his friend could help him home to his hotel. There, fortunately, were his wife and one of his children. He was put immediately to bed, and every remedy that could promise relief was adopted. On Friday he rallied somewhat. Dr. Christison was summoned from Edinburgh, and came, accompanied by the rest of Delta's family. On Saturday he grew worse, and early on Sunday morning he expired, surrounded by his dear family, and by two of his old friends, one of the

Messrs. Blackwood and Mr. Aird. On Thursday the 11th, he was buried in Musselburgh, where he had long officiated as a physician, universally respected and beloved. He was only fifty-three. For nearly thirty-three years he had been a popular contributor to "Blackwood's Magazine." His principal literary works are, "A Legend of Genevieve, with other Poems" (which includes the best of his poetical contributions to the magazines and annuals), "Mansie Wauch," and the "Sketches of Poetical Literature," above criticised. He published, also, several medical works of value, as well as edited the works of Mrs. Hemans, and wrote the "Life of John Galt," &c.

We have spoken briefly, but sincerely, in the article, of Delta's intellectual merits; it remains only to add, that, although we never met him in private, we can testify with perfect certainty, that a better man, or a lovelier specimen of the literary character, did not exist: he had many of its merits, and none of its defects; he used literature as a "staff, not a crutch"—it was the elegant evening pastime of one vigorously occupied through the day in the work of soothing human anguish, and going about doing good. Hence he preserved to the last his child-like love of letters; hence he died without a single enemy; hence his personal friends—and they were the *élite* of Scotland—admired and loved him with emulous enthusiasm. Peace to his fine and holy dust! reposing now near that of the fine boy, whose premature fate he has sung in his "Casa Wappy"—one of the truest and tenderest little poems in the language, to parallel which, indeed, we must go back to Cowper and his verses on his Mother's Picture. In all the large sanctuary of sorrow, there is no chamber more sweetly shadowed than that in which the dear child reposes, embalmed in the double odors of parental affection and poetic genius.

*Note.*—Since this paper appeared, Mr. Aird has collected Delta's poetry into two volumes, and prefixed to them a Life, which, in beauty of language, depth of feeling, and unity of artistic execution, has seldom been equalled.

## NO. IV.—THACKERAY.\*

WE do not intend to dwell in this paper on Thackeray's merits and defects as a writer of fiction, else we might have steered a course somewhat different from that of other critics; and while granting his great powers of humour, sarcasm, and interesting narrative, his rare freedom from cant, and his still rarer freedom from that tedious twaddle which disfigures the fictions of many writers of the present day, we might have questioned his true insight into, and conception of, Man, deplored his general want of spirituality, laughed over his abortive attempts—few as well as abortive—to be imaginative, and wondered with a great admiration at the longitude of the ears of those critics who name him in the same day with the author of "Rienzi," the "Last Days of Pompeii," the "Caxtons," and "Zanoni." But our business now is with him entirely as a critic, and his only work at present on our table is his series of lectures on the English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century.

We may, before opening our battery of objections, first premise, that, as a readable book, this has seldom been surpassed. Whatever quantity of summer-salmon, *hotch-potch*, veal pie, and asparagus you may have been discussing, and however dreary you may feel after your dinner, Thackeray's amusing anecdotes and conversational style will keep you awake. Next to Macaulay and Hazlitt, he is the most entertaining of critics. You read his lectures with quite as much gusto as you do "Pendennis," and with infinitely more than you do such dull mimicry of the past as is to be found in "Esmond." Clever, too, of course, sagacious often, and sometimes powerful, are his criticisms, and a geniality not frequent in his fictions, is often here. Sympathy with his subject is also a quality he possesses and parades; indeed, he appears as one born out of his proper time, and seems, occasionally, to sigh

\* Thackeray's English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century. London: Smith & Elder, Cornhill.

for the age of big-wigs, bagnios, and sponging houses. Such are, we think, the main merits of this very popular volume. We come now to state its defects, and to contest a few of its opinions.

In the first place, Mr. Thackeray errs grievously in the title of his volume. That professes to include solely the English Humorists; and yet we find in it the names of Congreve and Pope, neither of whose plays nor poems, with all their brilliant wit, possessed a particle of humor; and of Steele, whose absurdities have indeed made him the "cause of humor" in others, and whose pathos is sometimes very fine, but whose attempts, whether at humor or wit, are in general lamentably poor. Had Mr. Thackeray written a book on the "Humorists" of the *seventeenth* century, he would have inserted a chapter on "Butler and Milton;" Butler, for the mere wit of Hudibras, and Milton, for the puns and quibbles of the rebel angels!

Secondly, Mr. Thackeray much over-estimates the size and splendor of the galaxy he has undertaken to describe. Again and again he speaks of the wits of Queen Anne as incomparably the brightest that ever shone in Britain. We dare not countersign these statements, so long as we remember the Elizabethan period, and the names of Shakspeare, Sidney, Spenser, and Bacon; or the era of the two last Georges, and the names of Scott, Byron, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. In none of the worthies Thackeray has described, do we find the element of true *greatness*. Swift was wondrously strong, but had no moral grandeur—like the fearful hybrids described in the Revelation, his power was in his tail, and with it he dealt out pain, like the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. Pope had rarest polish and point, but is seldom powerful, and never profound. Steele, Congreve, Prior, and Gay, were all *dii minorum gentium*. Addison, next to Swift, was incomparably the truest and most natural genius of his age; and yet does not appertain to the "first three." Thackeray quotes Pope as thinking Bolingbroke so superior to all other men, that when he saw a comet he thought it was a coach come for him. And well he might, if, as many used to believe, comets be launched from, and return to that "Other Place." But, as to his reputed powers, we recur to Lamb's



inexorable principle—"Print settles all," and renew the question Burke asked sixty years ago, "Who now reads Bolingbroke—who ever read him through?" To him, as to all deniers, more intellectual power than he deserves has been conceded. Had the "comet" carried away his works, it would have cost the world nothing, although Mallett (the "beggarly Scotchman" who "drew the trigger" of the blunderbuss of blasphemy) a great deal. That one man, Edmund Burke, might have been split up into a hundred Bolingbrokes; and yet no one was ever heard crying out for "A comet!" "a comet!" at his exit.

Thirdly, we quarrel with Thackeray for the manner and style in which he has chosen to issue his lecturing lucubrations. We do not know what others may think, but to us the lectures, in *manner*, seem elaborate imitations of the lectures on "Heroes and Hero-worship," by Thomas Carlyle. Now, the oddity and egotism which we must bear in Carlyle, we cannot bear in any imitator—not even in Thackeray. They have a *fade* and false air in him, and it takes all his talent to reconcile us to them.

Passing to the individual lectures, we are inclined to rank Swift as the best, as it is the first, of the series. None of Swift's former critics have so admirably represented the Irishman's emasculated hatred of man and woman—his soundless misery—his outer crust of contempt, in vain seeking to disguise the workings of his riven and tortured conscience—his disgust at the human race rushing up at last, as if on demon wings, into a denial of their Maker! We think that, as moral monsters, Swift, and that Yankee-Yahoo, Edgar Poe, must be classed together. Neither of them could believe that a race which had produced *them* had any link relating it to the Divine. They saw all things and beings in the vast black shadow cast by themselves.

Thackeray knows how easy, cheap, and worthless a feeling toward a man like Swift *MERE* anger were. He has followed, therefore, in general, the milder and surer track of pity. He mourns over, as well as blames, the maimed and blinded Cyclops, that "most miserable of all human beings." He does not know, or at least he tries not to reveal, the secret of his wretchedness, although that, so far as physical causes are con-

cerned, seems to us as transparent in the case of Swift as of Pope. We confess to a greater admiration for Swift than for Pope. Swift was infinitely more a natural product than Pope; who, but for intense culture, would never have reached eminence at all. If Pope had more polish, Swift, to use De Quincey's language, was a "demon of power." Pope used poisoned Lilliputian arrows, Swift directed at man and God a shaft like that described by old Chapman, which was

" Shot at the sun by angry Hercules,  
And into shivers by the thunder broken."

Pope did wondrously with his sparkling couplets; Swift effected greater results with his careless, rambling rhymes, which seemed more child's play, but which were the sport of a Titan, and often of the madman in Scripture, "casting firebrands, arrows, and death." Pope's hatred to man seems small, selfish spite, compared to that gigantic horror and disgust at his species which pursued Swift all his life. Pope, in a thin, cracked voice, squeaks out his irritated feelings; Swift howls them forth to earth and heaven. Pope was essentially and exquisitely small; his love is an intense burning drop; the dance of his fancy reminds you of that led by angels on the point of a needle; when in the convivial vein he tipples, it is in thimblefuls; his sarcastic sting is very sharp and small, and he takes care never to spill an infinitesimal of the venom. Like Tom Moore after him, he is a poetic Homœopath, and, whether he try to kill you with laughter or to cure you by sense, he must deal in minute and intensely concentrated doses. When he invents, as in the "Rape of the Lock," it is a minute machinery of Sylphs and Gnomes; when he attacks, it is the dynasty of the "Dunces," that "small infantry;" when he examines works of art, it is through a microscope; when he describes love, it is that tiny tortured mimicry of the great passion, exhibited by such nauseous beings as Eloisa and Abelard; and when he translates, he hangs cymbals on the stalwart arms of old Homer, and turns his majestic pace into a jingle of tinkling sound. Swift, on the other hand, was, if not truly great, immensely large; and even in his most careless verses you see a large black purpose—that, namely, of a

wholesale libeller, who, as he said himself, loved many men but hated man—looming through; and some of his veriest trifles make you tremble.

Thackeray, at page 15, says, "Swift's heart was English, and in England, his habits English, his logic eminently English; his statement is elaborately simple; he shuns tropes and metaphors; he has no profuse imagery." Here we deem Thackeray mistaken. Swift had an exceedingly fertile fancy, and there are more memorable sentences, each carrying an image from his pen, floating through literature, than from any other save Shakespeare's. We do not say that his imagery is always, or very often, poetical, but it is always abundant, picturesque, pointed, and new. Thackeray has been deceived by Swift's coldness of manner. He does not shout "Eureka" over every whole truth or half truth he sees. His figures are all chased in lead. This at least is true of his later manner, except when his fury at man, as in the fourth part of "Gulliver," is fully roused, and when, as Thackeray well says, "it is yahoo language; a monster gibbering shrieks, and gnashing imprecations against mankind, tearing down all shreds of modesty, past all sense of manliness and shame; filthy in word, filthy in thought—furious, raging, obscene."

But in his earlier writings there is far more fire of style, as well as freshness of thought, and richness of imagery. Witness the "Tale of a Tub." Well might he say in his old age, "Good God, what a genius I had when I wrote that book!" It is certainly his most astonishing production. You see a "virgin mind crumbling down with its own riches." It is the wildest, wittiest, wickedest, wealthiest book of its size in British literature. Talk of Swift having no "profusion of figure!" What would Mr. Thackeray want more than he gets in the following paragraph:—"The most accomplished way of using books at present is twofold—either, first, to serve them as some men do lords—learn their titles exactly, and then brag of their acquaintance; or, secondly (which is indeed the choicer, the profounder, and the politer method,) to get a thorough insight into the index by which the whole book is governed and turned, as fishes are, by the tail. For to enter the palace of learning at the great gate, requires an expense of time and forms; therefore, men of much haste and little

ceremony are content to get in by the back-door. For the arts are all in a flying march, and therefore more easily subdued by attacking them in the rear. Thus physicians discover the state of the whole body, by consulting only what comes from behind. Thus men catch knowledge, by throwing their wit on the posteriors of a book, as boys do sparrows, by flinging salt on their tails. Thus human life is best understood by the wise man's rule of regarding the end. Thus are the sciences found, like Hercules's oxen, by tracing them backwards. Thus are old sciences unravelled, like old stockings, by beginning at the foot." We do not vouch for the elegance of all these figures; but, in fertility, the passage equals Jeremy Taylor or Shakspeare; and there are a hundred similar in the "Tale of a Tub."

That "Swift was a pious and reverent spirit," while in the very next paragraph we are told that he had put his "scepticism and apostacy out to hire," is rather a strange assertion. How can one who revels in filth and downright beastliness—whose miscellanies in verse are a disgrace to human nature—who flings ordure on that Schekinah of man's body, which God's Son entered and purified—who ran through the world shrieking that "man is utterly wicked, desperate, and imbecile"—who ruined the happiness of three females—who became, in his own words, little else than "a poisoned rat in a hole"—and who mocked and gibbered at the profounder mysteries of the Christian religion, be called "pious or reverent?" We are not the least charitable of critics; and we feel deep and solemn sorrow over the mountain of ghastly ruin which Swift at last became: but we dare not apply to him epithets which would fit a Jack Wilkes, a Mirabeau, or a Tom Paine, as well as the miserable Dean of St. Patrick's. More fitly and finely does Thackeray afterwards ask, "What had this man done? what secret remorse was rankling at his heart? what fever was boiling in him, that he should see all the world bloodshot? We view the world with our own eyes each of us, and we make from within us the world that we see. A weary heart gets no gladness out of sunshine; a selfish man is sceptical about friendship, as a man with no ear doesn't care for music. A frightful self-consciousness it must have been which looked on mankind so darkly through those eyes."

All this sketch of Swift, indeed, with the exception of the statements we have exposed above, a few Carlylistic abruptnesses of style, such as "silence and utter night closed over him—an immense genius, an awful downfall and ruin," &c., is written with great pathos and energy; and if not so elaborate as Jeffrey's celebrated paper, breathes, we think, a finer and more humane spirit.

His treatment of Congreve does not call for special remark, unless this, that we do not think him sufficiently severe on the immorality of that writer's plays. We pause with greater interest over the venerable name of Joseph Addison. There are many writers, as we have hinted before, who have taught us more, and whom we admire more, than Addison—many subtler, stronger, more complete, and profound; but there is scarce one, except John Bunyan, whom we love so well. He does not suggest much; but how he soothes! How soft and rich the everlasting April of his style! By what green pastures and still waters does he lead us! What a tremble there is in his beautiful sentences, like that of a twilight wave just touched by the west wind's balmy breath! How he stammers out his mild sublimities; and how much does his stammer, like a beautiful child's, add to their effect! His piety, so sweet and shepherd-like; his kindness, so unaffected; his mannerism, so agreeable; his humor, so delicate, so sly, so harmless! What a contrast in spirit to Swift and Pope, who alone of his contemporaries could vie with him in popularity or power! We know no better way of rounding off a week's intellectual work, than amid the closing shadows of the Saturday evening to lift up Addison's serious papers, and to allow their honey to distil slowly upon our souls. Burke spent some of the last hours of his life in listening to Addison's papers on the Immortality of the Soul.

Thackeray by one word (a word we had applied to Addison years ere we had ever read a line of the author of "Vanity Fair")\* gives the character of all that series of periodical literature, which included the "Tattler," the "Spectator," the "Guardian," the "Freeholder," &c.—he calls it "prattle." Both Steele and Addison were fine prattlers; only the prattle

\* See "Second Gallery"—article "Professor Nichol"

of Addison was directed to higher subjects. Steele prattled, often tattled rather, about politics, and the modes of the day, and the fair sex. Addison prattled about the stars, and the soul, and the glorious dreams of the Arabian heaven; and it seemed a divine prattle, like that of a "child-angel." A certain simple infantine ease and grace, which it were vain now to seek to reproduce, distinguished the language of both. We have mentioned the "Freeholder." This series, although so strongly recommended by Johnson, is now, we fear, but very little read. We only met with it a year or two since; but we can assure our readers that some of the most delectable tidbits of Addison are therein contained. There is a Tory fox-hunter still riding along there, whom we advise you to make up to, if you would enjoy one of the richest treats of humor; and there is a Jacobite army still on its way to Preston, the only danger connected with approaching which is, lest it kill you with laughter.

Well did Addison call himself the "Spectator." He could not *spea*k, but only prattle in a delightful way. But he could *look* at all objects and persons, above, below, or around him, with a keen and quiet, a mild and most observant eye. Had he been as profound as he was wide—as eloquent and passionate as he was true, delicate, and refined, he had been our finest prose writer. We cordially coincide with our author's last paragraph:—"When he turns to heaven, a Sabbath comes over that man's mind, and his face lights up from it with a glory of thanks and prayer. His sense of religion stirs through his whole being. In the fields, in the town; looking at the birds in the trees, at the children in the streets; in the morning or in the moonlight; over his books in his own room; in a happy party—good-will and peace to God's creatures, and love and awe of Him who made them, fill his pure heart, and shine from his kind face. If Swift's life was the most wretched, I think Addison's was one of the most enviable. A life prosperous and beautiful—a calm death—an immense fame, and affection afterwards for his happy and spotless name."

Who has not heard of Sir Richard Steele? Wordsworth says of one of his characters—

"She was known to every star,  
And every wind that blows."

Poor Dick was known to every sponging-house, and to every bailiff that, blowing in pursuit, walked the London streets. A fine-hearted, warm-blooded character, without an atom of prudence, self-control, reticence, or forethought—quite as destitute of malice and envy; perpetually sinning, and perpetually repenting; never positively irreligious, even when drunk, and often excessively pious when recovering sobriety—Steele reeled his way through life, and died with the reputation of having been an orthodox Christian, and a habitual drunkard; the most faithless and most affectionate of husbands; a brave soldier, and an arrant fool; a violent politician, and the best natured of men; a writer extremely lively, for this, among other reasons, that he wrote generally on his legs, flying, or meditating flight, from his creditors, and who embodied in himself the titles of his three principal productions—the “Christian Hero,” the “Tender Husband,” and the “Tattler,” being a Christian hero in intention—one of those intentions with which a certain place is paved; a “tender husband,” if not a true one, in his conduct to his two ladies; and a “tattler” to all persons, in all circumstances, and at all times. But besides—and it is this which has made him immortal, and which he himself valued more than all personal fame—he was the friend and coadjutor of Addison. He called him in early to his aid, and found himself, he said, ruined by his ally, as the Britons were when they sought the assistance of the Saxons, a stronger power. It is utterly ridiculous, as Hazlitt and Hunt were wont, to prefer or equal Steele’s papers to Addison’s. They are more slipshod, indeed, and conversational; they reflect more literally the outer current of the then London life; they contain some very tender and some very picturesque touches, which seem sometimes like the lucky chance of a painter who drops or dashes his brush upon the canvas, and produces striking effects; but in matter, in polish, in delicacy and depth of humor, in beautiful fancy, or in graceful language, they can only be placed beside Addison’s by the criticism of caprice, or by the power of prejudice. Steele has no artistic merits. His pathos is that of a fine fellow, maudlin after some great loss or reverse. His glee, as Thackeray well says, is that of a “box full of children at a pantomime.” He has all Goldsmith’s spirits and

absurdities, without a tithe of his genius. His best sobriquet had been "Sir Richard, or Reginald Rattle." And how poor and needless in his critic to say, "Steele was not one of those lonely ones of the earth whose greatness obliged them to be solitary." He might as well have gravely assured us, that Swift was not George Herbert; nor Rochester, Milton; nor Goldsmith, Burke; nor the author of the "Book of Snobs," the writer of the "Natural History of Enthusiasm." Towards the close of the chapter, however, Thackeray has an admirable antithetical account of the manner in which Steele, Addison, and Swift have dealt with the one tremendous subject of death: Steele looking up to it with the awe-struck face of a child—Addison looking down on it with a quiet, meditative, half-humorous eye—and Swift stamping on the tombstone, and crying, "*Fools, do you know anything of this mystery?*"

In his fourth lecture, after trifling very pleasantly with two ingenious triflers—Prior and Gay—he brings forward his whole strength to prove Pope the greatest literary artist that England has seen, "besides being the highest among wits and humorists with whom we have to rank him," and the "highest among the poets," we presume of that period of poetry. And yet, ere he closes, he goes farther than this, and predicates of the passage which closes the "Dunciad," that it is the most "wonderful flight" of poetry, the "greatest height of the sublime art." He compares his early poems, such as the Pastorals, Windsor Forest, and the "Essay on Criticism," to the first victories of Napoleon!

Pope has, to do him full justice, risen sometimes into the moral sublime; but to that highest form of writing, common in our great poets, which combines moral and material sublimity into one splendid yet terrible whole, in which grand images from nature flock around, and fall down before and combine to illustrate some big emotion of the soul or heart, he has never attained. The lines our author praises so highly are, in our judgment, a mere hubbub of words, composed in equal proportions of mixed metaphors, bombast, and absolute nonsense. Yet perhaps our readers may prefer Thackeray's estimate conveyed in the following language:—

"It is the *brightest* ardor, the loftiest assertion of truth,



the most *generous* wisdom, illustrated by the noblest poetic figure, and spoken in words the aptest, grandest, and most harmonious. It is heroic courage speaking—a splendid declaration of righteous wrath; the gauge flung down—the silver trumpet ringing defiance; it is Truth the champion—it is a wonderful single combat!" Had Pope been alive, it would have taken all the counterweight, we fear, of "Pendennis" and "Vanity Fair," to have prevented him adding a codicil to the "Dunciad," and inserting in it the name of his most admiring critic.

The fifth lecture opens pleasingly on a subject ever fresh and delightful, at least to us—Hogarth, the greatest moral painter of the world. Thackeray, so far as he goes, discourages well on this great canvas-poet. We are no connoisseurs of the "serene and silent art;" nay, are apt to look with considerable contempt upon the jargon of painters, the most disgusting jargon in all the broad realms of pedantry. Our only question about paintings is, how much meaning and mind do they contain? how high do they prove the tide of soul to have risen in the artist? and how high do they raise it in us? And looking at Hogarth in this light, we dare pronounce him, with the exception of Michael Angelo and Raphael, the greatest painter that ever lived. Nay, perhaps we should not have made these exceptions; for, if Michael Angelo wrought on more colossal materials, aimed at higher things, and reached a savage grandeur unknown to the Englishman; if Raphael was more graceful, holier in his purpose, more beautiful in his conceptions, and more delicate in his execution, Hogarth's power was magnified by the very coarseness of the materials he used, and by the very commonplace of the objects he painted. The gift of the first two resembled wealth; that of the third was alchemy. The two first went out, so to speak, to Australia, and collected its ore lying thick as morning dew; the third staid at home, and turned everything he saw into gold. Most of the peculiarly Shakspearian qualities were Hogarth's—wide sympathy, command of tears and laughter, subtle perception of analogies, unconscious power of bending all things into a common centre, and causing them to promote a common artistic object, so that a very fly murmuring in a room where a great tragedy is concocting or taking place, be-

comes an important element in the interest, and all "asides," however insignificant apparently, serve to point the moral, or to adorn the tale; and the irresistible introduction of beauty into the heart of terror, and along the side of the loathsome and the despicable, like the light that *will* shine in dark rooms after every candle has been put out, and every beam of day has been excluded—beauty, which, in Shakspeare, sows flowers upon the dreary crags of agony; and in Hogarth (a thing which Coleridge notices), brings in fine female faces into many of the coarsest, and many of the darkest of his scenes, like embodied images of Eternal Love looking down upon sorrow, and sin, and rudeness, and vice, and silently whispering, "I bide my time." Even his Cock-Pit, his Gin Street, his Beer Lane, his Marriage a La Mode, his Rake's Progress, are all haunted by the heavenly face of angelic woman; just as in Shakspeare, Cordelia bends over the dying Lear, Ophelia murmurs her tender sympathy beside the wild speeches of the melancholy Hamlet, Miranda uplifts her sweet face amid the "Tempest," and Perdita, like a sunbeam, pierces the confused mistakes and miseries of the "Winter's Tale." Even more constantly than in Shakspeare does this image of female loveliness pervade the prints of Hogarth; for while in them it is rarely absent, Shakspeare has forgot to light up with its gentle ray such deep Nights of suffering and controversy as "Timon" and "Macbeth."

Following Hazlitt, Thackeray dwells lovingly on Hogarth's gusto, his rich repetition of thought, as in *Marriage a La Mode*, where "the Earl's coronet is everywhere: on his footstool, on which reposes one gouty toe turned out; on the sconces and looking-glasses; on the dogs; on his *very crutches*;"—his constant moral purpose; the faithful picture his prints form of the age of the first Georges, and the comparison they suggest and enable us to substantiate between his and our own time, especially between the London of 1753 and the London of 1853. With the higher imaginative qualities of the great painter, such as those we have enumerated, he is not so familiar; and compared to the papers of Lamb and Hazlitt on the subject, his may be said to be such a sketch as Hogarth was wont to execute of his future pictures *upon his thumb nail*.

Smollett succeeds—a rough, roaring, ill-natured, and yet originally kind-hearted Scotchman of the last century, with three powers in extraordinary development: self-will, humor, and a certain strong poetical gift, which could only be, and was only now and then, *stung* into action. To see his self-will, in its last soured and savage state, let us consult his “Travels.” He was the “Smelfungus” of Sterne, who traveled from Dan to Beersheba, and found all barren. We are among the very few who have read the book. It is a succession of asthmatic gasps and groans, with not a particle of the humor of “Humphrey Clinker.” Among his novels, “Roderick Random” is the most popular, “Peregrine Pickle” the filthiest, “Sir Launcelot Greaves” the silliest, “Clinker” the most delightful, and “Ferdinand Fathom,” in parts, the most original and profound. There is a robber scene in a forest, in this last novel, surpassed by nothing in Scott, or anywhere else. His “Ode to Independence” should have been written by Burns. How that poet’s lips must have watered as he repeated the lines,

“Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye.”

and remembered he was not their author! He said he would have given ten pounds to have written “Donocht-head;” he would have given ten times ten, if he had had them, poor fellow! to have written the “Ode to Independence.” Thackeray, who is in chase of Fielding, finds nothing very new to say of Smollett, and ignores his most peculiar and powerful works. His best sentence about him is, that he went to London, “armed with courage, hunger, and keen wits.”

To Fielding he goes, *con amore*, and shows him as “he is, not robed in a marble toga, and draped and polished in a heroic attitude, but with inked ruffles, and claret stains on his tarnished laced coat, and on his manly face the marks of good-fellowship, of illness, of kindness, and of care.” Fielding, sooth to say, was, even for that age, a sad scamp. Steele probably lived as dissipated a life, but Steele did not put his depravity in circulation by printing it in his books. When men come to *that*, it is a fearful symptom. Paul speaks of those who not only do ill themselves, but have *pleasure* in *them* that do it. Such is the case with authors who print their obscen-

ities or blasphemies. They cannot write without reproducing their own vices. They roll them as a sweet morsel. By bestowing them on ideal characters, they multiply their own enjoyment of them. Their imagination has become so polluted, that it overflows on all their pages. They sometimes are actuated, it is to be feared, by a worse motive: they wish, namely, to make others as wicked and miserable as themselves. Bit by hydrophobia, they run about everywhere, with lolling tongues, in search of others to destroy. We do not think that this latter was Fielding's motive. He, in part from depraved taste, and in part from carelessness, simply transferred his own character to his novels. Mr. Thackeray seems to us to overrate "Tom Jones" amazingly. It is a piece of admirable art, but composed of the basest materials, like a palace built of dung. "Amelia" is not so corrupt, but it is often coarse, and, as a whole, very poor and tedious. "Joseph Andrews" is by far the most delightful of his writings. With less art than "Tom Jones," it has much more genius. Parson Adams is confessedly one of the most original and pleasing characters in fiction. Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield, Joseph Cargill in "St. Ronan's Well," are both copied from him, but have not a tithe of his deep simplicity and delicious *bonhomie*. We predict that, in a century hence, "Joseph Andrews" will alone survive to preserve Fielding's name. We wish Thackeray's plan had permitted him to say a little more of Richardson's Dutch style of novel-writing, and of those enormous books of his, reminding you of the full-bottomed periwigs of the past, in their minute and elaborate frizzle, and which yet, when shaken by the wind of passion, seem sometimes to nod as grandly as the "ambrosial curls" of Jove himself.

Sterne comes next, and his character meets with very severe and summary treatment—the more, perhaps, and deservedly, as he was a clergyman. As an author, he has been the father of an immense family of fiction writers. Goethe has had him in his eye, both in the "Sorrows of Werter" and in "Wilhelm Meister." Rousseau derived a great deal from him. Jean Paul Richter, although possessing far more sincerity and depth of spirit, has copied his affected manner. The Minerva Press was long his feeble echo. Southey's "Doctor" was

very much in his style; and the French novelists are still employed in imitating his putrid sentimentalism, although incapable of his humor and pathos. Plagiarist of passages, as he has been proved, he was, on the whole, an original writer; and, blackguard as he was, his vices, like those of Rousseau and Goethe, have contributed to the power and piquancy of his writings. We state this as a fact, not as a plea in his defence. He seems to have been not merely, like Fielding, a dissipated man, but, like Poe, a heartless scoundrel. It is a proof of the originality of his mind and style, that he arose and flourished in spite of cliques and coteries, and, as an author, lived and died alone. His works are now somewhat shorn of their popularity; but some parts of them, in eloquence, tenderness, and humor, are not surpassed in the English language. "Alas! poor Yorick!"

The last, and one of the finest sketches, is that of "poor dear Goldy," as Johnson used to call him. We have already tried, in a series of antitheses, to describe Steele. It would require a few hundred more such to describe Goldsmith. He was one of the most amiable and most envious of men. He played with every child he met, and abused almost every contemporary author. Himself the most absurd of characters, he had the keenest perception of absurdities in others. He "wrote like an angel, and talked like poor poll." He never wrote a foolish thing, and never said a wise one. He was at once Harlequin, and the good Samaritan. He divided again and again his last shilling with poor unfortunates, and told lies by the bushel. He had a keen sense of religion, and yet his life was in direct opposition to many of its precepts. Johnson said of him, "Dr. Goldsmith was wild, sir; but *he is so no more.*" Burke burst into tears at the news of his death. Reynolds, when he heard of it, painted no more that day. As a writer, he had a most enviable little garden-plot of reputation. We would rather have his fame than Homer's. What delight his one book, "The Vicar of Wakefield," has given! What shouts, screams, sweats of laughter, have his plays elicited! How many hearts his "Deserted Village" has melted within them! How many thousands in foreign lands,

"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,  
Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po,"

have repeated the noble lines of the "Traveler," and blessed its queer, kind-hearted author!

Thackeray closes with some striking remarks, attempting to show that the calamities of authors are, in general, owing, not to the neglect of the public, but to themselves. There is much truth in what he says. Literary men have been often improvident and immoral; but this, while it has sometimes proceeded from perverted tastes, has often also proceeded from the precariousness of their profession. Literary men, however industrious and regular, are wretchedly underpaid; and except when they have another profession or a private fortune, are poor. *Now*, speaking generally, they are men of respectable characters, and of working habits; and yet, does one out of ten of them die, without subscriptions being organised for behoof of their wives and children? We blame not the booksellers; they cannot be expected, taking them as a whole, to look at the matter except in a commercial point of view; but we blame, first of all, the government, for not devoting more of the public money to pensions, prizes, and similar rewards of literary merit; and, secondly, the public, which, while spending so much upon degrading vices, or foolish frivolities, or mere passing and ephemeral light literature, has so little to spare for works of genius, and gives what little it does give with an air of such supreme contempt, or such condescending patronage, or such sublime indifference.

In fine, although we have been compelled often to differ from our author, we thank him for the pleasure we have derived from his work, and especially for the opportunity it has afforded us of retreading a very delightful field in British literature.

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## NO. V.—THOMAS MACAULAY.

ONE great distinction between the great and the half-great is, we think, this: the half-great man is in his own age fully commented on and thoroughly appreciated; his character is faithfully inscribed in a multitude of reviews; his career is

reflected in a wall of mirrors, which image his every step, and, "now in glimmer, and now in gloom," trace out his history ere he be dead, and leave very little for posterity to add or to take away. The great man, on the other hand, while seldom quite overlooked or ignored, is as seldom during his life-time fully recognised: a shade of doubt hangs around his form, like mist around a half-seen Alp; his motions are all tracked, indeed, but tracked in terror and in suspicion; his character, when drawn, is drawn in *chiaro-scuro*; his faults are chronicled more fully than his virtues; the general sigh which arises at the tidings of his death is as much that of relief as of sorrow; and not till the dangerous and infinite seeming man has been committed safely to the grave, does the world awake to feel that it has hid one of its richest treasures in the field of death. Nor should we entirely for this blame the world. For too often we believe that high genius is a mystery, and a terror even to itself; that it communicates with the demoniac mines of sulphur, as well as with the divine sources; and that only God's grace can determine to which of these it is to be permanently connected; and that only the stern alembic of death can settle the question to which it has on the whole turned, whether it has really been the radiant angel, or the disguised fiend.

We might illustrate our first remark by a number of examples. But our recent readings supply us with one more than sufficiently appropriate to our purpose. We have risen from reading for the first time Prior's "Life of Burke," and, for the tenth or twentieth time, Macaulay's "Essays," collected from the "Edinburgh Review." And as we rise we are forced to exclaim, "Behold a great man, fairly though faintly painted by another, and a half-great man, unintentionally but most faithfully and fully sketched by himself." Macaulay has eloquently panegyricised Burke, and accurately discriminated him from inferior contemporary minds. But he seems to have no idea of the great gulf fixed between Burke's nature and genius and *his own*. He always speaks as if he and the object of his panegyric were cognate and kindred minds. Nay, some of his indiscriminate admirers have gone the length of equalling or preferring him to the giant of the Anti-Gallican Crusade. Let us, for their sakes, as well as his, proceed to point out the essential differences between the two.

Burke, then, was a natural, Macaulay is an artificial, man. Burke was as original as one of the sources of the Nile; Macaulay is a tank or reservoir, brimful of waters which have come from other fountains. Burke's imagination was the strong wing of his strong intellect, and to think and to soar were in general with him the same; Macaulay's fancy is no more native to him than was the wing of the stripling cherub assumed by Satan, the hero of the "Paradise Lost," although, like it, it is of many "a colored plume sprinkled with gold."

Macaulay's intellect is clear, vigorous, and logical; but Burke's was inventive and synthetic. Burke seems always repressing his boundless knowledge; Macaulay is ostentatious in the display of his. Of Macaulay's train of thought you can always predict the end from the beginning; Burke's is unexpected and changeful. Macaulay's principal powers are two—enormous memory and pictorial power; Burke's are also two—subtle, grasping, interpenetrating intellect and imagination. Burke is the man of genius; Macaulay the elaborate artist. Burke is the creature of impulses and intuitions—impetuous, fervid, often imprudent, and violent; Macaulay never commits himself, even by a comma, and seems, if he has impulses, to have dipped them in snow, and, if he has intuitions, to have weighed them in scales before they are produced to his readers. Burke has turned away from philosophic speculation to practical matters—from choice, not necessity; Macaulay from necessity, not choice—it is an element too rare for his wing. Burke, as he says of Reynolds, descends upon all subjects from above; Macaulay labors up to his loftier themes from below. Burke's digressions are those of uncontrollable power, wantoning in its strength; Macaulay's are those of deliberate purpose and elaborate effort, to relieve and make his byways increase the interest of his highways. Burke's most memorable things are strong simple sentences of wisdom or epithets, each carrying a question on its point, or burning coals from his flaming genius; Macaulay's are chiefly happy illustrations, or verbal antitheses, or clever alliterations.—Macaulay often seems, and we believe is, sincere, but he is never in earnest; Burke, on all higher questions, becomes a "burning one"—earnest to the brink of frenzy. Macaulay is a utilitarian of a rather low type; Burke is, at least, the bust



of an idealist. We defy any one to tell whether Macaulay be a Christian or no; Burke's High Churchism is the lofty buskin in which his fancy loves to tread the neighborhood of the altar, while before it his heart kneels in lowly reverence. Macaulay's writings often cloy the mind of his reader—you are full to repletion; from Burke's you rise unsatisfied, as from a crumb of ambrosia, or a sip of nectar. Macaulay's literary enthusiasm has now a far and formal air—it seems an old cloak of college days worn threadbare; Burke's has about it a fresh and glorious gloss—it is the ever-renewed skin of his spirit. Macaulay lies snugly and sweetly in the pinfold of a party; Burke is ever and anon bursting it to fragments. Macaulay's moral indignation is too labored and antithetical to be very profound: Burke's makes *his* heart palpitate, his hand clench, and his face kindle like that of Moses as he came down the Mount. Burke is the prophet; Macaulay the grown and well-furnished schoolboy. Burke, during his life-time, was traduced, misrepresented, or neglected, as no British man of his order ever was before or since; Macaulay has been the spoiled child of a too early and a too easy success. As they have reaped they have sown. Macaulay has written brilliant, popular, and useful works, possessing every quality *except* original genius, profound insight, or the highest species of historical truth; Burke, working in an unthankful parliamentary field, has yet dropped from his overflowing hand little living germs of political, moral, literary, pictorial, and philosophic wisdom, which are striking root downwards, and bearing fruit upwards throughout the civilized world. Macaulay's works hitherto consist of several octavo volumes; but "Liberated America," "India set free from Tyrants," and "Infidel France Repelled," are the three atlas folios which we owe to the pen and the tongue of Edmund Burke.

We had other points of contrast, which we forbear to press. Indeed, we feel ashamed at continuing so long a contrast between two persons so unlike. But Macaulay's unwise friends have compelled us to renew the old, and apparently superfluous work, of showing the superiority of an original to an imitator—of a sublime genius, informed from on high, to a cultured and consummate artist, galvanized from below—of one wearing a mantle which seemed dropped from some Fiery

Chariot of the Past, to one "of the earth, earthy"—of one whose flights of genius and wisdom might almost entitle him to the name of the Second Plato, to one who would be proud, we suspect, to bear that of the Second Bacon, even although the meanness were added to the majesty, and the immortal degradation to the everlasting praise of the ambiguous and all-overrated name of the Chancellor of England.

We propose now, first, briefly to characterize, and in a general way, some of Macaulay's Essays; and, secondly, to bend special attention on the longest and most elaborate of them all, that on "Lord Bacon."

There are in every author's works what may be called *representative* parts or papers—papers or books which indicate the leading qualities in his mind, or the leading stages in his intellectual development. Thus, in the case before us, we have "Milton" representing Macaulay the young and ardent Scholar, "Byron" and "Johnson" representing him as the full-grown *Litterateur*, "Warren Hastings," and a host more, representing him as the budding Historian, and "Lord Bacon" as the Thinker.

We have, first, "Milton," still, in our judgment, the sincerest, if not the most faultless of his papers. It is the work of a premature and impassioned school-boy, with the glow of the first perusal of the "Paradise Lost" extant on his cheek, and with the boy's dream of liberty still beating in his heart. Mr. Macaulay says, that the paper contains "scarcely a paragraph of which his mature judgment approves." We may add, that there are many paragraphs in it which he now neither could nor durst write. "Men," says James Hogg, in the "Noctes," "often, as they get auld, fancy themsel's wiser, whereas, in fac', they are only stoopider." It is not every one who, like Robert Burns, with his early volume of poems, sees at a glance that the "first bairn o' his brain is also the best." Artistically, Macaulay's "Milton" is not his best; but it is the opening of his vein—he throws forth in it a mass of pure ore, which he has since chiefly been employed in beating thin, or mixing with baser metals. Thus we find him, in many of his subsequent papers, cutting and clipping at his splendid picture of the Puritans—a picture which we deem true to the life of these illustrious men, as well as to the first sincere and

burning convictions of Macaulay's young soul. He was not, as Sir Daniel Sanford somewhere insinuates, "a dishonest panegyrist of the Puritans." Brought up in a religious atmosphere, its influence still floated around him, as he wrote of those who "looked down with contempt on the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and on priests—for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language—nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand." But, since, the giddy effects of success and the chilling influences of the world have combined to damp and lower his lofty tone, and he seems more than once inclined to give up the Puritans as a ragged regiment, and to say, "I'll not march with them through Coventry—that's flat." The associate of Lord Palmerston could not latterly retain much sympathy for Harry Vane. The confrere of Whately could scarcely now be honest in praising John Brown. When he wrote "Milton," he was a worshipper dividing his adoration between three objects—Poetry, Liberty, and Protestantism—and all three seemed robed in virgin loveliness. All have undergone a disenchantment—Poetry no longer walks the clouds, but the earth; Liberty is no more the "mountain-nymph," but the highly accomplished daughter of a whig nobleman dwelling in Grosvenor Square; and Protestantism (see his review of "Ranke") instead of being the true child of the Primitive Age, and the destined heir of the Earth, is a candidate with nearly the same chances of final success, as the "Woman sitting on the scarlet-colored Beast, and with the names of Blasphemy written on her forehead."

Indeed, we advise any one who wishes to compute the extent and the rapidity of the cooling process which has passed over Macaulay's mind, to compare his papers on "Milton" and on "Ranke." In the one, he speaks with just indignation of the vices of Popery, "complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for nummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance." In his review of Von Ranke, on the other hand, how tenderly does he treat the Jesuits, some of whom he classes beside the Reformers; how coolly he traces the progress of the Catholic re-actions;

with what satisfaction almost he records that Protestantism has come to a stand-still, forgetting or ignoring the facts that, although as a proselytising power nearly stationary in Europe, it is advancing as a missionary power in every other part of the globe; that as the principal element of *British* progress, its torch is leading the great march of general civilisation; that, in its rudest shape, as "Protestantism protesting against itself," it has of late begun to heave in revolution every country and throne on the Continent; and that even to hint a doubt as to the ultimate result of its struggle with Popery, is an act of treachery and cowardice, and betrays an ignorance of its true nature and pretensions. In all his later papers, Macaulay talks as if Popery and Protestantism were modifications of one system, instead of being opposed, as light is to darkness, inertia to progress, deceit to truth, God to the Devil. And while considering the attempts of such men as Macaulay to fritter away to nothing the distinctions between God's creed and the Devil's creed, we are tempted to use the language of the prophet, "Wo to them who put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, evil for good and good for evil." The contest between Popery and Protestantism is no scuffle in the dark between detachments of the same army; it is a deadly fight between deadly foes, carried on in one compartment of that field, the world, where the powers of light and darkness have been waging for ages their ever-deepening, ever widening, but not for a moment dubious engagement.

Protestantism at a stand-still! Neither as a statement of the facts at the time the paper was written, nor as a prophecy of what has occurred since, is this assertion of any value. It is true that nations do not of late change their creeds as individuals their cloaks. Islands are not now converted, as of yore, by the "yellow stick" of a Protestant proprietor (see Dr. Johnson's "Tour to the Hebrides"). Protestantism has, like many a strong tide, been rolled back again and again in its progress. Catholicism, on the other hand, has had, and has at this hour, spasmodic revivals, sudden flushes, like the colors of the dying dolphin. She is dying hard. Nor can she fully expire till the brightness of Christ's coming surprise, and the "breath of his mouth" consume, her. But, apart

from this, we think it difficult for a candid and true-telling observer to shut his eyes to the fact of a slow, steady, cumulative advance of the part of Protestantism—often repulsed, sometimes driven fiercely back, but always returning to the charge, and gaining sure and gradual ground with the wave of each successive generation. What, after all, has she lost? At her birth, she was hailed by literature and science: they—on the points, at least, in which she differs from Popery—are on her side still. Her infant arm lifted the Printing Press, the Mariner's Compass, and the Telescope. She holds them now with a stronger grasp than ever. She rent then the shroud from the Bible, and she still defies the Catholic world to repair the rent. In Britain and the United States, and the great rising colonies of the South, and in the stronger half of Germany, she possesses the real keys of the intellectual world—keys more powerful than those fabled ones which clank at the side of Peter. In our own country, she, not long ago, with almost a superfluous expenditure of power and wrath, repelled the insolence of Papal aggression. One thing only does she want to complete the strength and dignity of her attitude, that is, not to become more Popish, but to become more Protestant. Without sacrificing her Bible or the leading principles of her creeds, without yielding to the raving scepticisms of the day, she might and must accommodate her spirit and language to those of the age; she might in many points abridge and modify her articles of faith; she might and must get rid of the wretched incrustations of Paganism and Popery which are still around her—become, in short, that New Protestantism for which Milton's spirit long ago sighed, which alone can attract and detain before the Lord the young and the gifted of the age, and be thus prepared, as the "Bride, the Lamb's Wife," for welcoming her Husband, when he descends to the Universal Bridal. And then, like Milton's eagle, shall this young and puissant Protestantism rise above the fogs of scepticism, and the purple mists of Rome, and mate her stern and starry eye with the unearthly and far-streaming glory attending the steps of him "who shall come, will come, and will not tarry."

In his papers on Byron and Johnson, we find his enthusiasm wondrously subdued and united to an artistic self-command,

a self-consciousness, an elaborate wit, a bitter sarcasm, and a *tone of society*, not to be found in his first paper. With the exception of his papers on Madame D'Arblay and Addison, they are the last of his purely literary articles. Before he wrote them, he had entered Parliament, and there is in both a great deal of the clever Parliamentary reply. The elaborate carelessness of the papers on Byron is wonderful. Never was art more artificially concealed. Never did a deliberate and oil-smelling production seem so like an *impromptu*. Done in the sweat of his brow, it yet reads like a private letter. Its simplest-seeming sentences have probably cost him more trouble. Such are a "poor lord and a handsome cripple." "Lord Byron's system had two great commandments, to *hate your neighbor*, and to *love your neighbor's wife*." How cool such fledglings seem! and yet they were probably hatched with great care, and amid considerable heat. His character of Byron is a long antithesis, and might, had it been done into rhyme, have figured well in Pope's "Moral Epistles." Bits of blame, and pats of praise, are distributed with exemplary equality. But, to apply his own words, "it is not the business of the critic to exhibit characters in this sharp, antithetical way." It is his business rather to show us the true nature of the man at once, by a winged word; or a simple sentence, or in a figure "piercing to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit." Had he spoken of Byron's aimless earnestness, his unprincipled and ill-managed power, his union of generosity and selfishness, his strong religious tendencies, connected with an utter want of definite religious or even irreligious opinions, or hinted at the dark germ of derangement which was working all along in his bosom, he had, in a sentence, helped us to a distincter view of the poet's character, than by his whole seventeen pages of vague and unmingled brilliancy. As it is, he accounts for Byron's matchless misery from his bad education, the loss of his first love, the nervousness of dissipation; from every cause save the deepest of all—the want of habitual intercourse with the Father of Spirits. Byron was miserable, because he felt himself an orphan, a sunbeam cut off from his source; "without hope, and without God in the world." But how puritanical would any statement like this have looked in the eyes of the Reform Club, or of the splendid circles of Holland House!

To Boswell and Johnson he is, we think, unjust, in various measures. Boswell, in his relation to Johnson, was one of the most sincere and remarkable of men. Used like a spaniel by his idol—now caressed contemptuously, and now fiercely spurned—laughed at by his friends and by the world for his attachment to Johnson, he remained true to him to the last, and has suffered for it after as well as before death, and nowhere more severely than at Macaulay's hands. To worship was the master instinct of his being, and he could no more avoid following it, than can the moon escape the gravitation of the earth. His conduct was the finer, from the contrast it presented to the selfish and infidel habits of the eighteenth century. Boswell had a god—Johnson; but Voltaire and Hume had none, except themselves or their callous theories. Boswell, in short, seems to us the first crude curdling of the future Hero-worshipper, as the Alchemist was the rude forerunner of the genuine Chemist. Nor were his talents so contemptible as Macaulay alleges. He was undoubtedly a clever and cultivated man. And the power to which he principally pretended, that of appreciation, he possessed in a very large degree. He *saw* Johnson as few even since have seen him; he gave him, during his life, an ante-past of the praise of future ages, and he added one important item to his claims for immortality. Boswell's "Life," according to many, is Johnson's greatest work; according to all, it is *one* of his best. Nay, we cannot but fancy that Macaulay originally possessed a great deal of the better element of Boswell, as his "Milton" testifies, and that to clear himself of the suspicion of being a Boswell of a bigger size, he has shed the blood of his own spiritual father.

Scarcely less unjust is he to Johnson himself, who, had he been alive, would certainly have turned him on the spit of one of his rolling periods before the slow, grim blaze of his manly indignation. "What is your opinion, Dr. J., of Thomas Babington Macaulay?"—"Sir, the dog has some gifts and accomplishments, but he is a Whig, a vile Whig, a trimmer, sir, who would have acted as laureate to King George and the Pretender at the same time. Sir, he would have written a panegyric on the Pretender, on the steam of the sack which the king had just sent in at his door." "Isn't he something

like Burke, sir?"—"No, sir; Macaulay, sir, has not breath to blow the bellows to Burke's fire. As Goldy would say, he has Burke's 'tongue,' but without 'the garnish' of his 'brains.'"—"What think you of his style, sir?"—"It is mine, sir, docked, yet the dog turns round, and abuses the suit of clothes he has not only stolen, but *mangled down*, sir, to his own stature."—"Doesn't he know a great deal, sir?"—"Yes, sir, facts, not principles; he has millions of farthings, but few guineas, and no bank-bills; he is like a school-boy, who knows all the birds' nests in the parish, but can neither fly, nor lay an egg, sir, nor even incubate to life the deposits of others."—"What think you of his religious creed, sir?"—"Why, sir, it is that of one who prefers God to the Devil, because he is in, and not because he ought to be in, and who is full of saving clauses lest the tables should one day be turned, and the New Premier prove somewhat absolute. He has no creed, sir, only a new credibility of God and the gospels, sir."—"Isn't he descended from your old friend, Miss Macaulay, sir?"—"Too-too-too, sir, not from *Miss* Macaulay, surely, sir. His grandfather was a minister in the Hebrides, and probably had the second sight, which he has not left to his descendant, any more than old Zachary left him his religion, sir."

Dr. Johnson's merit, according to Macaulay, has now shrivelled up into his "careless table-talk." His writings have little merit. His criticisms on Shakspeare and Milton are "wretched." He knew nothing of the "genus, man—only of the species, Londoner." His style is "systematically vicious." His mannerism is "sustained only with constant effort." His "big words are wasted on little things." His prejudices and intellectual faults, too, are magnified by being torn from their context, and set up in cluster upon one pillory. Thus complacently does he try to "write down" old Sam an ass. The attempt is as insolent as we hope to show it to be vain. Now, first, his table-talk was not "careless." It was the very sweat of his mind. In all good society he "talked his best." Secondly, it has discovered no new powers in Johnson's mind, although it has revealed new weaknesses. It has *increased* our notion of his variety, shrewdness, and readiness of retort, but not of his power, eloquence, and deep-hearted sincerity of nature. Thirdly, with regard to the prejudices and failings



of this mighty man of valor, we ought to remember his time, his training, the dark disease which, like the leprosy in an ancient house, sent a stream of misery and embryotic madness throughout all the porticoes of his splendor, and all the columns of his strength—polluted every door, and looked out at every window—to remember that, strong and rock-founded that house must have been, to contain unbroken such a fearful guest—and to remember, in fine, that he is a poor forester who judges of an oak by its gnarled knots—and a petty astronomer who weighs the spots against the body of the sun. Fourthly, that his criticisms on Shakspeare and Milton do not bring out the minor beauties, the more delicate shades, the subtler meanings, of our two great national poets, is admitted. Johnson's mental, like his bodily, eye saw only tall cliffs, wide fields, bold mountains, broad outlines—it was not conversant with details or minute varieties. But who has spoken better of the more general and palpable qualities of Shakspeare, or of "Paradise Lost"—the pyramid of Milton's handiwork? It he found to surpass even his own Brobdignagian stature, and looking up to it in reverence, he had little leisure to mark the subordinate buildings on which Milton had slowly piled up its proud pinnacle. He is accused of not praising "The Castle of Indolence" very warmly, but he gives its author, and his far better poem "The Seasons," their full meed. He called "Gray a barren rascal, and Churchill a blockhead;" but, if Mr. Macaulay had, as at other times, chosen to translate these expressions out of *Johnsonese* into plain English, they had just meant the truth—this, namely, that Gray's genius was not so prolific as his learning was extensive, and that Churchill was not so good as he was able, and not so able as many thought. He has, indeed, admitted many stupid fellows into his "Lives of the Poets;" but, as he said he would, he has, in *his own way*, "told us that they were blockheads." In fact, his real offence, as a critic, in the eyes of many, is what, with us, is a merit. Himself a sincerely honest and pious man, an intense hater of humbug, of deceit, of brazen-faced infidelity, of twaddling sentimentalism, of the cant of virtue, and of the cant of vice, he has unsparingly exposed such offences wherever he found them, and many who cry out about his critical, have, in fact, taken fright at his moral, severity.

Fifthly, as to the faults and mannerism of his style, we are not "careful to answer in this matter," least of all, in reply to the leading mannerist of this century. Johnson's is the mannerism of a left-handed giant. He throws awkwardly, but he throws stones which Macaulay could not *lift*. To say that he "sustains his style by constant effort," is simply untrue. It is notorious that the most sounding papers in "The Rambler" were written at a sitting, and *currente calamo*. He had but to dip his pen in ink, and there flowed out a current of thought and language, wide and voluminous as the Ganges in flood. We own our wrath always kindles when we hear others beside Macaulay preferring Addison to Johnson. We are not blind, as our former paper testifies, to his timid beauties, his inimitable irony, slight and withering as the smile of a scornful angel, his languid graces, the elegant negligence of his costume, his sweet-blooded and subtle humor, or his graver powers of contemplation and pathos; but there is this important difference in Johnson's favor:—Addison is chiefly a mirror; Johnson is a native mind. Addison reflects back—man and nature; Johnson is a thinker, penetrating into both. Addison's discussions and philosophising, even when just, are feeble; Johnson's, even when erroneous, are always strong. Witness the papers on the "Paradise Lost" by the one, and the "Lives of the Poets" by the other—a work which, with all its faults, is the most masculine and massive body of criticism in the English tongue. Addison's may be called almost a female mind of exquisite calibre; Johnson was every inch a man, nay, a son of Anak, from the rough earth, but with a heart touched, and a brow radiant with the influence and light of heaven. We base, indeed, our deepest admiration of this great man on his moral and religious qualities. We are never weary of thinking of his sterling honesty, his rugged integrity, his fearlessness of consequences, his untaught dignity, his generous sympathies for all real sorrows, his benevolence—bear-like in its external manifestations, lamb-like in its heart—the depth and profundity of his spiritual convictions, the tenderness of his conscience, the firmness with which he clung to Christianity, in a low and infidel age, "faithful found among the faithless," his habitual fear of God—yea, we are not soon weary of admiring the rim of righteous anger which

surrounded him at times—the severity of his occasional judgments, the fury of his assaults upon impostors of all sorts, and we can even bear with his sturdy prejudices, the errors of his temperament, the hasty verdicts of his excited conversation, his political and religious bigotries, and the rough usage he often gave to his friends and worshippers. These, like the scars of scrofula upon his cheek, are not beautiful, but they are *his*, and if they injure the grace of his aspect, they neither take a cubit from his intellectual stature, nor damp the vehement, though irregular flame of benevolence, sincerity, manhood, and piety, which burned in his heart. Would to God that some similar giant were now to tower up suddenly above the crowd of our sciolists, sceptics, and small poets, and rebuke them into sense, modesty, and Christianity again! Johnson was too decidedly an honest, fearless, and brawny original for Macaulay's handling. He succeeds far better in depicting the splendid clap-trap of Chatham, the gimerack ingenuity and polished malice of Horace Walpole, the manners-painting force of Madame D'Arblay, and the cultured common sense and elaborate eloquence of Sir James MacIntosh. He succeeds better still in crushing the wasp Croker, sting, wings, bag of venom, and all, by one nervous grasp of his strong, hot hand, or in clapping into air, amid mimic thunder, the empty paper-bags of some of our modern poets.

As Macaulay's series of papers went on, it became manifest that he was gradually diverging from the flowery fields of literature, and turning towards the more difficult and less frequented heights of history. His "Machiavelli," "Burleigh," "Chatham," "Temple," and "Lord Clive," were all, in reality, historical chapters—the antennæ of coming historical works. Of such, by far the ablest and most brilliant is the article on "Warren Hastings." Indeed, we find in it, as in a microcosm, all the qualities, positive and negative, since more largely displayed in his "History of England." These are intimate acquaintance, not only with the leading events, but with the minutiae, the gossip, the family history, and the floating scandal of the period; intense sympathy with the *personnel* of his heroes—a partiality for certain characters amounting to favoritism—a hatred for others amounting to fury—immense power of painting traits in character, and scenes in his-

toric life—an inferior gift of describing nature—frequent, cool, and refreshing literary allusions, blowing like breezes across the otherwise arid or blood-dried pages of his tale—Whig zeal and religious indifferentism, both indifferently concealed—an occasional negligence of style more highly finished in reality than the most swelling of his paragraphs—great and labored passages, reminding you of historical paintings, and relieved by surrounding etchings of familiar life—a perpetual consciousness of himself, and of the artistic nature of his task, which seldom permits any spontaneous betrayal of emotion, and makes even his enthusiasm seem cold, as the hair of a sculptured Moenad—something of the interest and simplicity of Hume, along with the richer tints of Robertson, and the gorgeous description of Gibbon—all the qualities of a good novel, added to some of those of an ideal history—these are the leading peculiarities alike of his historical papers, such as “Hastings,” and of his “England,” and they constitute him a historian after this age’s own heart.

Admitting right cordially the exceeding interest and graphic power of the paper on Hastings, there are one or two points on which we must differ. We find in it evidences of that infirmity of trimming and balancing which so easily besets our author. We certainly do not think that Warren Hastings was a monster. Monsters in the moral world are still rarer than monsters in the natural; but, if the half of what Burke said, and the whole of what even Macaulay says against him be true, he must have been one of the worst characters in history. If seduction, perfidy, cruelty, greed, murder, both retail and wholesale, implacable revenge, and insatiable ambition, with a hundred smaller items of falsehood and corruption, are to be screened by success, it is time that the Ten Commandments were burned, the Sermon on the Mount buried, and the laws of nations and of nature repealed. Either he was one of the worst or one of the most maligned of men. Macaulay takes neither view; but between admiration of Hastings’ abilities, and anger at some of his actions—reverence for Burke, and pity for the accused—sympathy with the oppressed people of India, and wonder at the splendid edifice of empire which was based on their blood—he himself hangs, and he suspends his readers in a state of equilibrium which becomes half-painful

and half-ludicrous, and tempts you at last to exclaim, What would you have us to think of this man, after all? Was he a wise governor, or a cruel and unmanly oppressor? Shall we bless, or shall we ban him? Shall he sit in the synod of the gods, or, where Burke would have placed him, in that part of the Indian Pantheon where dwell the horrid deities who preside over small-pox and murder, and who, like the tremendous Three in the 'Curse of Kehama,' expecting the coming of the 'Man Almighty,' might be conceived to wait impatiently for his advent, 'having been found worthy' to sit beside them on a burning throne?"

There is another point on which we crave a word: it is on the authorship of the "Letters of Junius." This Macaulay, somewhat dogmatically, attributes *entirely* to Sir Philip Francis, although there is much internal evidence to prove him incapable of their better portions. The mere mechanism of their composition, the curt style, the fierceness and occasional malignity of their spirit, he could have supplied, but the profounder touches of satire, the strong clearness of diction, the high, almost superhuman scorn which so often inspirits them, the frequent gleams of deep political sagacity, and the figures, sparing in number, but breathing an intense poetical spirit—all point to the darker moods and the fretted and gall-dipped pen of Edmund Burke. We do not mean that he was their sole or chief author, but that his subtle genius had its share in their conception, even as it had in some of Barry's pictures and Reynolds's discourses; and that he drew many of their sharpest and finest strokes, seems to us certain, and to some others, too, who can recognise that "Roman hand," and who know that its versatility was equal to its power. Burke notoriously was in the secret\* of their authorship. He was, according to Johnson, the only man living equal to their composition. And as to style, neither he nor Junius were consistent in it. Junius had three different styles—that of his private notes to Woodfall—that of his hasty letters, such as his first to Horne Tooke—and that of his more elaborate epistles. Burke, too, strange to say, had three styles—his plain style, as of his charges against Hastings—his middle style, as of his

\* See Prior's "Burke," Vol. i.

"Sublime and Beautiful," and "Thoughts on the Present Discontents"—and his ornate and poetical style, as in his "French Revolution," and his "Regicide Peace." There are, besides, passages and clauses in Junius which we are as sure were Burke's, as if we had seen him write, or dictate, or interline them. Take one, "the melancholy madness of genius without the inspiration." Burke once said to Boswell about Herbert Croft, "He has the contortions of the sibyl *without the inspiration.*" Of another we may say (accommodating Macaulay's language on another occasion), "Aut Burke aut Diabolus." It is in reference to Wilkes: "The gentle breath of peace will leave him on the surface, unruffled and unremoved. It is only the tempest that lifts him from his place." We could add a hundred more. On the whole, were we on a jury to try the question as to the authorship of "Junius," we should be compelled, between the conflicting forces of the external and the internal evidences, to return a verdict against "Edmund Burke, Philip Francis, and other person or persons *unknown.*"

*Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, is a proverb so commonplace, as to require an apology for its repetition. And yet we cannot remember anything more appropriate to the light in which we are now to regard the subject of this sketch, in connection with his paper on Lord Bacon—which is, Macaulay the Thinker. To use his own illustration, "Hannibal at Waterloo, or Wellington at Plataea," were not more thoroughly out of place than Macaulay "found" in the difficult region of intellectual thought—a region which he knows not fully, has seldom visited, has visited not in the choicest society, and where he has never yet, we suspect, *spent a night*, the glooms and the grandeurs of which are alike unappreciated by his strong but unimaginative and uninstinctive spirit.

Had we foreseen that Macaulay meant so far to compromise his reputation as to write a paper on a purely philosophical subject, we should have put in a previous protest, based on the following grounds:—First, in all his other writings he gives no evidence of possessing the elements of a genuine thinker. He thinks in facts, not in figures or symbols. He estimates all things by their sharp edges, not by their solid bulks or their ideal shadows. He looks at them not as they are, but as they

seem to him, or to the mirror from which he has caught their shape. The term absolute (except in its political sense, as connected with "absolute power!") has to him little or no meaning. He has an outer eye of much scope and clearness, but his inner eye is midnight. We dare any of his admirers to quote a sentence of his writings containing in it a new truth, chased in a new image—"an apple of gold in a picture of silver." Of poetic physics, he has some distinct idea—of poetic metaphysics none whatever. Nor has he given himself that philosophic culture and training which would qualify him for sounding metaphysical depths. With all his vast knowledge, it is clear to us that he has only run across the surface of philosophy, and studied it rather as a historian, than as a profound critic of its various systems and schools. Nor has his temperament or his heart ever urged him on to very earnest personal inquiry into the grounds of belief or leading principles of thought. Easily satisfied himself, he has been unable to give satisfaction or even suggestive hints to earnest and anxious inquirers. The profound thinker is either decidedly religious in his temperament and views, or decidedly the reverse. Macaulay is neither. And hence, while he speaks on historical matters with authority and power, on all abstract questions he exhibits the feebleness without the modesty of a child. The voice and manner are those of a master, but the matter and spirit are those of an inapt and forward scholar.

Lord Bacon was a subject, certainly, more than worthy of all the powers of the author. The apparent contradictions in his character, the singular and humiliating events of his history, his position as the leader of a wide intellectual movement, his achievements as the broad-browed parent of modern method—the width of his mind, which reminds you of the first rude maps of the globe, where the breadth and the blunders are alike enormous—the oriental wealth and splendor of his fancy, recalling to you Solomon "speaking of trees, from the cedar to the hyssop," and issuing proverbs by the thousand—the proud, positive results which have sprung from his system have combined to render the woollack on which sat he whom the poet calls

"The greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind,"

more interesting and more magnificent in many men's view than the thrones of "Ormus or of Ind," and to make them think of an angel seated on a planet, and looking down in supreme dominion upon the subjected provinces of a universal intellectual empire.

To grapple with such a mind and character was a noble task, and Macaulay has undoubtedly brought to it all the resources of his knowledge, the strength of his ingenuity, and the energies of his style. But he has at the same time exposed himself to certain grave charges, into the proof of which we must now shortly enter.

Now, first, as in reference to Hastings and other equivocal characters, he has not painted Bacon well as a whole. He has set the apparently contradictory parts of his character in violent and antithetical opposition to each other—opposition so violent as to produce a monstrous effect; he has not seen or shown to us any principle accounting for and unifying the whole. God does not make men on the plan of antithesis. Pterodactyles and all such contradictions of chaos are long extinct. Inconsistencies, of course, there are in all characters: but where a character is hollow and false, the intellectual power must be partially vitiated, and where the heart is extinct, the mind must have its flaws and feebleness too. Had Bacon been the "greatest," he never could have been the "meanest" of mankind. The charges which Macaulay so ably and unanswerably urges against his *morale* tell, in some measure, against his method of investigating truth. Who, if we may accommodate Scripture language, "can bring a warm system out of a cold nature, a true creed out of a false heart?" No, not one!

There never was any such mis-creation as a *great* bad man, although wonderful and extraordinary villains have abounded. A really great man cannot be bad—a bad man cannot be really great. Prove the greatness, and you disprove the badness—or prove the badness, and you shatter down the greatness. A great man may be defined as one living under a lofty ideal, and having power in part to realise it. But the presence of a lofty ideal proves the absence of systematic and cold-blooded depravity, of abject meanness, of cowardice, cruelty, or falsehood. All true greatness is more or less moral. The highest



cherub is also the purest seraph. The player Shakspeare was an infinitely better and greater man than the Chancellor Bacon, and would have died rather than have committed one of his viler deeds, or handled one piece of his unclean gold. The philosophers of Greece, whom Macaulay would crush under Bacon's feet, had many faults, but not the worst of them cuts such a disgraceful and contemptible figure as he; and does this furnish no *prestige* in favor of their intuitive and transcendental method?

The extraordinary and able men of no principle or heart, who abound in the history of the world, remind us of busts—all brow and no heart. They are the incarnations of mere understanding—having neither, if we may use Kant's language, the pure reason, which perceives the absolute as existence—nor the practical reason, which discerns it as moral law. The great are composed of a combination, more or less varied in its proportions, of the pure reason, the logical understanding, the practical reason, and the imaginative sympathy. *They* are the composites, although the combination is definite, not contradictory. Whereas, the merely extraordinary man has the simple positive of understanding, added to a copious list of negatives. To this Bacon united the gift of a munificent fancy, not to speak of his multifarious knowledge and acquirements.

But, secondly, and chiefly, we charge Macaulay with greatly overrating Lord Bacon's philosophy, and with underrating, at the same time, the philosophies which preceded him. And here we mean out of his own mouth to condemn him. Now, to pursue him down his paper *seriatim*, we find him, as to the aim or end of the two philosophies, admitting, that while Bacon's sought solely the "relief of man's estate," that of the ancients aimed at "moral perfection." In other words, Bacon professed to cure corns, and Plato to heal consciences. Bacon wished to teach men to make better ships, or, as Macaulay has it, "better shoes;" and Plato to teach them to have nobler and happier souls. Bacon sought "fruit," perhaps ingrafted on rotten trees; whereas Plato and his school sought, although with imperfect success, to make the root of the tree sound, and its circulating sap pure. Bacon sought to make men better citizens of this hollow world; Plato to prepare them for the

"City of God"—the everlasting mansions of the true, the spiritual, and the happy. How significant that Bacon died, in consequence of seeking to stuff a fowl with snow—an apt emblem of the coldness and comparative pettiness of his method, and rather a striking type, too, of the manner in which his ablest modern panegyrist has sought to embalm a cowardly nature in elegant, elaborate, and icy praise.

"*Although* with imperfect success." These words will be seized on by the Baconian, and turned against us. But first, we intend, ere we close, to show that the success of Bacon's method has been exaggerated; secondly, we remember the words, "in great attempts 'tis glorious even to fail;" thirdly, to Plato and his direct or indirect influence, we may attribute all the *mere philosophic* spiritualism of the cultivated world—which, while "far below the good, is far above the great;" fourthly, Platonism was the herald of Christianity, and its failure lay in the want of some elements which Christianity supplied—namely, a perfect model, a supernatural power, and a permanent divine influence; fifthly, on the grounds on which Macaulay claims superiority to Bacon over the Platonic school, we might claim superiority for a tailor over Bacon or Plato either. But we may leave the details of this startling preference, although *legitimately deducible* from our author's premises, to the imagination of our readers. And, sixthly, he forgets, or overshoots while remembering, the fact, that he is talking of the *aim* of the two systems, and not at this point of their actual results. To make man better may not be so practicable as to improve the strops of his razors, but surely even at the first blush it is a *loftier* attempt.

But, according to Macaulay, contradicting old Seneca, "the first shoemaker was a greater philosopher than Seneca himself." Had he said the "first maker of a foot," he would have been nearer the mark. Neither Seneca nor the aboriginal shoemaker strikes us as a very wonderful philosopher. Both only shaped out the ideal of greater artists, the one imperfectly that of the Plato, the Pythagoras, and the Zeno, who saw the vast superiority of the soul to the body, of the next life to this, and the other of that plastic power, which, in forming a foot, silently bade man, while he covered its nakedness, to emulate its symmetry and copy its curve. But dare Macaulay

expect sympathy, when denying Seneca's assertion that "philosophy *lies deeper* than inventing transparent windows, tubes for diffusing warmth, or shorthand?" Judging by this statement, we should prefer Seneca as an expounder of the ideal philosophy, to Macaulay as an illustrator of the utilitarian. We are certain that the "three books on Anger," contain nothing so contemptible as the preference he gives, by implication, to "the man who teaches us to use our hands," over him "whose object is to form our souls." Not in the pages of Combe, or Robert Chambers, or of that Benthamite school which Macaulay himself once assaulted, do we remember anything so grossly absurd, or which more helplessly sacrifices the unhappy cause committed to his advocacy.

What! a shorthand writer equal to a philosopher or a great orator—Woodfall above Burke, Gurney above Canning, or Macaulay seated at Highgate, and drinking in Coleridge's inspired accents, equal to the "old man eloquent." And yet, such abject trash, when printed in the "Edinburgh Review," or re-published by the "Historian of England," must gain unchallenged acceptance, and require this humble pen to dash it into exposure and contempt.

In the paragraph which follows, he throws out insinuations against Seneca's character, which require only two remarks. First, Seneca is no more to be taken as a fair type of the Platonic philosophy, than Emerson of the system of Fichte, or Combe of Benehamism. He was the hard dreg of a Stoic, and the Stoic was only the stony similitude of a Platonist. And, secondly, should we accept this test of character in judging of Seneca's system, what is there to prevent us from applying it to Bacon's, upon the premises Macaulay has newly laid down, namely, that Bacon, if he *did* not, like Seneca, "meditate epigrammatic conceits about the evils of luxury in gardens, which moved the envy of sovereigns, rant about liberty, while fawning on the insolent and pampered freemen of a tyrant, nor celebrate the divine beauty of virtue with the same pen which had just before written a defence of the murder of a mother by a son"—nevertheless *did*, and that, too, under the light of Christianity in its full blaze, take bribes for justice, till corruption's own brazen brow grew pale, and her iron hand trembled; suffer the profligate minion of a monarch to influence

his most solemn judicial decisions; pervert the old laws of England to the vilest purposes of tyranny; by "tampering with judges, and torturing a prisoner," who, like the laws, was venerable, innocent, and old—and, lastly, become the betrayer, and the public, voluntary, and malignant accuser, of his own principal friend and patron? It is from his hand, be sure, and not from Seneca's, that our author would expect the key of nature. The two succeeding paragraphs contain a caricature of the objects and results of ancient philosophy, and their sting might easily be extended to all metaphysics, and to all theology. Mr. Macaulay forgets what he had so recently stated, that one object of academical studies is to elevate and purify the soul—a purpose independent of objective results: he forgets that the fruit sought being of the rarest kind, and hanging on the topmost branches of the tree of knowledge, cannot be gathered without long labor, and that the maintenance of a lofty spiritualism, of an attitude of wonder and worship among the better minds of every succeeding age, is a richer result than all the possible discoveries made under the Baconian method. Who would set the history of patents above that of opinions? Because theologic science has not unridled the mystery of a God, or explained the conditions or the localities of the future life, must the truths involved in such speculations, and the influences their agitation has exerted on the spiritual nature of man, be degraded in practical power below gas, the steam-engine, or the diving-bell? Are churches, missionary societies, great religious movements, high spiritual poems, and holy lives, not worth "fruit"?—and these, under God, we in this nineteenth century owe, not to the school of Bacon, but to that combination of the philosophy of Plato, and the divine teaching and working of Jesus, which constitutes the only theology, whether theoretic or practical, deserving the name—the theology of Taylor, Howe, Milton, and Coleridge.

The Baconian philosophy bears flowers and fruits in great abundance—and every year; but the deep thought of the ancient Greek mind, informed and warmed by the supernatural Sun of Christianity, like the aloe, brings forth, at long intervals, its precious blossoms, of which you may say with the poet—when you contrast them with more short-lived and

earthly productions—"one blossom of Eden outblossoms them all," and the fruit of which is everlasting. For why? Bacon sowed the thin soil of the finite and the present; Plato, the deep loam of the permanent and the infinite. Bacon expected and received the return of an early crop of material results; Plato's harvest lay in the slow yield of souls. "Now the things seen are temporal, but the things unseen are eternal."

Macaulay next expresses a disappointed hope in the "Epicureans." They were, according to him, mutilated utilitarians. It was even wonderful that "Epicurus' style did not breed a Bacon." *They* approached the true and sensible notion of things, in "referring all happiness to bodily pleasure, and all evil to bodily pain." But, like the gods in whom they were said to believe, they were lazy, and preferred lolling in the sun to constructing *Novum Organon*. *Our* notion of their sense is increased by this. If all happiness lies in bodily pleasure, and all evil in bodily pain, it may be a question if it be not our "strength to sit still" to take the good the gods provide us, or to drink our hemlock in silence, instead of moving heaven and earth, and convulsing the spheres, in order to wheel round to our feet new varieties of the same mixed and eternal meal. It was reserved for Macaulay to trace the proud Baconian Tree, which some compare to the Tree of Life, with its "many manner of fruits, and its leaves for the healing of the nations," to a rejected acorn from the trough of Epicurus.

That an infection of despondency seemed to lie upon other shapes of the Grecian philosophy besides the Epicurean, is granted to their detractor. But he has not pointed out the element which would have dissipated this gloom. That was Christianity, with its supernatural discoveries of the immortality of man—of his intimate relations to God—and of the God-Man Mediator. The ancient philosophers saw the necessities and cravings of man's immortal nature; they felt that to seek to supply these by temporal comforts were as insulting and absurd as to give rich food to a raging fever; they felt, some of them, that one great want of man was an Incarnation of the Godhead, and they had even a hope of his appearance—saw in some measure his "day afar off, and were glad," but it was only a dim prospect, after all, and they lived not to see

the culmination of their systems, and the completion of their desires, in the divine Carpenter of Nazareth. Hence, their systems have an imperfect aspect—like the Sphinx or the Tower of Babel—and, because only half finished, have been treated as ruins. But to call their despondency “contented” is unjust. If they sought moral perfection, and sought it sincerely, but found it not, how could they remain contented? Is even the maniac who tries to leap to the moon contented with his fall? On the contrary, the Baconian philosophy having made its bow to Christianity, and derived from it something of its liberal and unfettered spirit, has too often proceeded in its investigations to ignore its existence, or to treat its occasional protests with impatient scorn.

It is easy to enlarge on the errors of the schoolmen. But to charge these upon the ancient philosophers is as unfair as to confound Popery with Christianity. Scholasticism was the putrefaction of the old philosophy—deriving a two-fold virulence from the coeval putrefaction of religion, or it might be termed the dotage and driveldon of the Grecian philosophy. But, though doomed to dote, that glorious thing was not doomed to die. In spite of Macaulay’s pæan over its fall, it is alive and in full vigor still, and, surviving Bacon’s system, may merge, like the Morning Star, only in the Sun of that divine vision which we, according to His promise, expect sooner or later to irradiate the evening of the world.

Mr. Macaulay, after comparing Bacon to Bonaparte—a comparison with two edges—proceeds to make the following extraordinary statement:—“The object of the new philosophy was the good of mankind, *in the sense* in which the *mass of* mankind always *understood*, and *will always* understand, the word good.” Surely this gentleman was born to be a fatal friend to the fame of the Baconian system. What has been the object or “good” always hitherto sought or contemplated by the *mass of* mankind? Has it not been selfish gratification, in one or other of its myriad forms? Alas! for Bacon and his philosophy, if this was their object too! And alas! for man, if he is never to rise to a higher purpose; and if the Baconian philosophy be merely a devil’s wind to fan the sails of human selfishness to the end of time! Indeed, we are now at this point tempted to ask, if Mr. Macaulay be not, after

all, conducting a long, insidious, and ironical argument against Bacon's idea and method, after he had, in a former part of the paper, triumphantly demolished and trampled on his personal character. We defy the bitterest opponent of our English sage to utter a severer sentence against his system than has his eloquent and seemingly sincere eulogist. Poor Bacon! has he not fared like a man who should sit down to have his features copied by an artist apparently friendly, and should continue to smile, well pleased, while on the other side of the canvas there was rising, to the tune of smothered laughter, the most hideous of caricatures?

But this suspicion—which would save the intellect at the expense of the honesty of the writer—fades away and becomes incredible, as we follow him a little farther. He goes on to contrast the estimates Plato and Bacon have respectively formed of the different branches of knowledge. Plato thought that the “great office of geometry was to discipline the mind, not to minister to the base wants of the body.” Macaulay, on the other hand, sneers at “the abstract, essential, eternal truths” of this science, but passes over the great objection to its study, which is, that men accustomed to mathematical evidence become often incapable of appreciating or receiving any other. There is a mist around the region of mathematics colder and denser than that of metaphysics; and he who finds the darkness of problems clear, will by and by wink and be struck blind by the blaze of day. But surely the idea of mathematics propounded by Plato is far loftier than the other—unless Meyer on “Mensuration” can be compared to Newton’s “Principia.”

In talking of their estimates of astronomy, Macaulay grants that both agree in condemning the astronomy which then existed, and in desiderating a higher and purer; but, strange to say, he prefers Bacon’s “living astronomy”—which seems to have been nothing else than *astrology*—to Plato’s, which was a fine and large idealism. Bacon aspired to know the “nature and the influences of the heavenly bodies as they really are;” Plato, so attain to an astronomy to which the “stars are like the figures which a geometrician draws on the sand—an astronomy ‘independent of the stars.’” Suppose either of these imaginary astronomies attainable, which of the two, we ask,

were the nobler? Suppose both visionary, which vision is the grander of the two? Our common astronomy may be compared to a measurement of the dimensions of the human *brain*; Bacon's to a knowledge of its relations to the body and the nervous system; and Plato's to the study of the mind, of which the brain is but the organ. The stars may be called the developments of "God's Own Head:" our common astronomers number them, and take their weights and sizes; Bacon wishes to know how they are connected with our every-day life and fortunes; Plato, to read the divine idea—the large thought and purpose of God—inscribed on them in legible fire.

It seems to us that in this science we are fast approaching a point where we need the guidance rather of a new Plato than of a new Bacon or Newton. The telescope of Lord Rosse has sounded our present astronomy to its real depths. Few more great prizes are reserved, we suspect, in that starry sea. We have attained the knowledge that the stars are old, that they are of one stuff, and that there is no visible end to their numbers. What more of any moment, in this direction, by our present methods, is ever likely to be reached by us? It is like walking through a pine forest of vast extent and uniform aspect; a few miles tire and satisfy us. So now, the news of "stars, stars, stars," pouring on us in everlasting succession—all *like* each other, all distant, all inscrutable, and ever silent, the moral history of all unknown—produces very little effect, and the midnight heavens of modern astronomy become again, as to the eye of childhood, a mighty and terrible pageant or procession, the meaning and the purpose, the whither and the whence, of which we do not understand. And we are tempted to say to astronomers, as they prate of their new firmaments, and planets, and comets, "We know something like this long ago; can ye not give us some light on the meaning of these distant orbs, or read us off some worthy lessons of moral interest from that ever-widening but never-clearing page?" And to cry out to the stars, "Speak as well as shine, ye glorious mutes in the halls of heaven! Shed down on some selected and favored ear the true meaning of your mystic harmonies! Hieroglyphics, traced by the finger of God on the walls of night, when shall the Daniel arrive to interpret you, and to tell us whether ye contain tidings of hope



or of despair? Star-gazers have looked at you long enough, and mathematicians weighed and measured you; when shall the eye—the Rossian eye of a true seer—lift itself up to your contemplation, and extract the heart of your mystery? If not, men may soon turn away from you in disappointment, and look with as much hope on the bright foam-bells of an autumn ocean as on you, the froth of immensity.”

Plato's opinions on medicine are next brought forward against him; and yet in nothing do we perceive greater proof of his profound sagacity. True, he pushes his views to excess; but under the veil of his extravagant statements we see an idea which is gaining ground, and shall yet become universal—that medicine, as it began in, shall return to, surgery; that, as a barber was the first, he shall be the last physician; that in a body, as well as in a mind diseased, the patient best ministers to himself; that the words, “Physician, heal thyself,” may be freely rendered, “Cure thee of quackery by ceasing to be a physician at all;” and that nature, strong in her own resources, coincides with Plato in crying out, “Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it.” This belief, having sent on before it its imperfect forerunners, of Homœopathy and Hydropathy, is following them in full force, and in a higher form, and threatens soon to turn out of doors the “Royal Academy of Physicians,” to celebrate a universal jubilee—illumination at the death of quackery—and to burn drugs, like demons, in a blaze of consuming fire. Honor to old Plato for having, by one glance of his eye, seen the quackery of ages *through* and *down* to its doing day.

Grasping always at the ideals of things, Plato saw that all true legislation must propound to itself a lofty end, and he proclaims that end to be the “virtue of the subject.” This was the thought of Moses too, and the theocracy of Israel was its accomplishment. It were easy to prove that it was also the idea of Christ, although its realisation was *deferred*, and he did not at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. It is certainly the idea of Millennial Christianity; but Mr. Macaulay scouts it as utopian, and prefers the line of legislation recommended by Bacon, and, alas! acted on by the majority of human governors, which has for its watchword the low word “well-being;” which acknowledges no virtues but indus-

try and submission, and no God but Mammon; which is careful to regulate and derive revenue from stews, but never intermeddles with the education of souls; which tolerates every species of corruption so long as it is profitable, and the money derived from it does not *smell*; which washes the outside of the platter, whitens the sepulchre, and decks the corpse, but neglects the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith; and seeks (not in vain) to divorce human legislation from Eternal Justice. Let the praises of Baconian legislation be sung by mightier voices than ours—by the whirlwinds of anarchy, the blood-red trumpets of revolution, the cries of tormented and fugitive slaves, and by that crash of all-existing governments, which may form the first thunder-step of Him who is to come, and who, in pronouncing doom against them may make *this* the conclusive charge: “Ye did *not* make it the principal end of your legislation to make men virtuous; ye turned my father’s house into a house of merchandise, nay, a den of thieves; and ye must be scourged—*hence!*”

An antithetical comparison is introduced between the philosophy of Plato and that of Bacon, which, as it is short, we may quote:—“The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to exalt man into a God; the aim of the Baconian philosophy was to provide man with what he requires while he continues to be man. The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise us far above vulgar wants; the aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our vulgar wants. The former aim was noble; but the latter was attainable. Plato drew a good bow; but, like Acestes in ‘*Virgil*,’ he aimed at the stars, and, therefore, though there was no want of strength or skill, the shot was thrown away. His arrow was indeed followed by a track of dazzling radiance, but it struck nothing. Bacon fixed his eye on a mark which was placed on the earth, and within bow-shot, and he hit it in the white. The philosophy of Plato began in words, and ended in words; the philosophy of Bacon began in observations, and ended in arts.”

Let us try a parallel on the other side of the question, which, if not so pointed, is much more true. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to make the dungeon of man’s irrecoverable captivity as comfortable as possible, to ventilate it

well, to loose everything except the chains, to cleanse the floors, clear the windows of cobwebs, and to whisper the while to the bondage, *Esto perpetua*; that of the Platonic was to set the lawful but hopeful prisoner free. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to cherish, expand, and cultivate the animal and intellectual nature of man; that of the Platonic was to strengthen and purify the spiritual, which is the germ of the Godhead in humanity. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to "supply man's vulgar wants," and leave him content as a sated sloth with the supply; that of Plato was to suggest the thrilling thought, that there are instincts and wants in man which earth and time cannot satisfy, and which, with their silent uplifted fingers, point to immortality.

The aim of the Baconian philosophy was, even if *attainable*, not very *noble*—but attainable it was not, since the sensuous, as well as the spiritual, nature of man continually cries, "Give, give." Bacon's system, although it had a "New Atlantis," had no "Mahometan Paradise" annexed to it; the aim of Plato, partaking of the eternal, demands the field of the future for its development, and disdains the petty geographical gauges by which it has been hitherto tried. Plato "aimed at the sun," like Hercules of old; but Macaulay has not, with all his "thunder," broken the "shaft," which is still traveling upwards with unabated speed in the heaven-sent breeze of Christianity, and shall hit that far "White" in due time. Bacon's arrow has not pierced entirely through even his broad target—this world. The "philosophy of Bacon began in observations and ended in arts;" Plato's began in instincts, and shall end in a Daedalian crop of men.

Macaulay comes, in fine, to the question on which he lays most stress—that of the results of the two philosophies. On this point we have touched already, but must be permitted another word. Now, that many and wonderful results have sprung from the pursuit of the Baconian plan of philosophising, is conceded at once. But are they, after all, equal to the panegyrics bestowed on them? Are they not principally *mechanical*? Have they made man, as a whole, much happier, wiser, or better? What is "morality," or "moral obligation," without "grounds"—and Bacon has, according to Macaulay, laid down no such grounds. He says, "he loved

to dwell on the power of the Christian religion, to effect much that the ancient philosophers only promised." This might have been only a compliment; and how easy it were to turn round and to say, "the objections to the ancient philosophy you urge, may be urged, with equal force, against the Christian faith—where do we find the moral perfection at which it aimed?—where the faultless men it sought to produce?—has it not been a sublime failure?" And so we grant it has; unless you admit the facts of a great future, to which it points, and of a supernatural intervention, which it promises. And what we demand for Christianity, we demand also for the Platonic philosophy. Like it, it has done much, but not hitherto in proportion to the infinite scale it has itself fixed. Yet we are willing to weigh even its present products against Macaulay's elaborate list of the results of the Baconian method. "*That has lengthened life*" (Macaulay hopes, we suppose, to live longer than Methuselah!), "*mitigated pain*" (Christianity has no solace in it equal to chloroform!), "*extinguished diseases*" (by creating new ones), "*increased the fertility of the soil*" (to the benefit of the serf, eh?), "*given new securities to the mariner*" (the polar star shone and the needle trembled before Bacon was born), "*furnished new arms to the warrior*" (is *this* a service to the human race? must the name of Bacon be written in blood?), "*spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of form unknown to our fathers*" (what an achievement! the rainbow is nothing to it!), "*guided the thunderbolt innocuously from heaven to earth*" (shall we never hear the last of that poor, tattered, tell-little kite of Franklin's, the Elijah's mantle of modern philosophers?), "*lighted up the night with the splendor of the day*" (was it not so also in the halls of Persepolis and the palaces of Babylon, or is all the glory of night included in gas?), "*extended the range of the human vision, accelerated motion, annihilated distance, facilitated intercourse, enabled man to descend into the sea, soar into the air, penetrate into the noxious recesses of the earth, traverse the land in cars without horses;*" and so on he goes, like the hack orator at a Watt or Mechanics' Institute, through the wearisome round of railways, diving-bells, balloons, safety lamps, &c. Splendid toys, truly! Childish things, fitting our present state of ad-

vancement. Nay, rather, *conductors*, laid out and waiting for the electric influences of a better era. But to speak of them as *ends*, as objects, as living things, as aught but dead trifles, till the shadow of the divine be made to fall on them, and the power of the divine to propel them, and the spirit of the divine to animate them, is intolerable from one pretending to be a philosopher. We throw into the scale over against them the highest philosophy, poetry, and theology of the last two centuries in Britain, Germany, and America, all of which has been colored by the genius, and more or less inspired by the spirit, of Plato, and also the deep spiritual effects and moral movements which have sprung from these, and ask which is likely to kick the beam? And, if it be said that we are unfairly adding Christianity as a make-weight to Platonism, we reply that the one is, in our notion, the other fulfilled—the other *Deified*, yet practicalized; and that we have a right to rate the system we defend at its *best*.

The philosophy of Bacon has sounded the ocean, but it has ignored the profounder depth of the infinite in the soul of man. It has brought down the lightnings on its rod, but they have come reluctantly, and departed as much a mystery as ever. It has told the number, but not the meaning, of the stars, which roll on in their courses as inscrutable to us as they were to the Chaldean shepherds. Treating man as a cultivable ape, it has made his outward condition more comfortable; it hurries him along the path to his grave on railways; it smooths the harsh, outward edges of his intercourse with his fellow-man, but it leaves his heart as hard as it found it; it satisfies not, nor tries to satisfy, one of the deep thirsts of his moral nature. It has not cast a gleam of light upon the dark problems of his being, such as birth, sin, madness, or death. It casts not, nor seeks to cast, a ray upon the life beyond; it leaves a cloud of utter darkness upon his future progress on earth, and it neglects the care, if not denies the existence, of that immortal instinct which points up the poorest scion of humanity to his Father in heaven. It is of the earth, earthy; nor is that earth regarded as God's footstool, or as the springboard from which undying souls are to take their bound upwards, but as the eternal womb, homestead, and grave of certain erect compositions of clay, made, worked, and

at last buried in night, by a mere mechanical power. Should\* once more the Baconian appeal to the "Great Exhibition," and say, "Behold the triumph of my principles there," we answer—the splendor of the instance is granted; we saw there "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, in a moment of time;" but not for the gift, instead of the sight, of all this magnificence, would we bend down before the golden calf. That exhibition was, after all, an exhibition of the works of *man's* industry; if we would see the works of God's industry, we must look elsewhere—to those books which his Spirit has inspired, and to those men who bear his image, and fight his battles. Millions flocked to see this great sight; but there are sentences in Plato, and far more in John, one of which is worth the whole magnificent medley. And yet, were a new truth of still more compact significance and grandeur, from the same source, inscribed upon a pillar, and the existence of that pillar announced to the ends of the earth, how few would travel to read the same. So it is, but so it shall not always be. Nay, it appears to us that the Great Exhibition brought the Baconian system to a point; it produced all that it *could* do for humanity—and may not this bright pinnacle of human deed and skill have shone across the gulf, as a signal to the superior and supernatural power, seeing in it man's splendid impotence, and gilded woe, to take his case, and the remainder of his otherwise hopeless destiny, by and by, into *his own* all-wise, powerful, and merciful *hands*? The cry of Plato was for an avatar, and a fuller revelation of the Deity. That was fulfilled in Christianity, but Christianity, in unison with creation, is beginning to cry aloud, in her turn, for a farther and a final apotheosis. The words of John Foster are seldom to be despised, and let both Baconian and Platonic Christian hear him with attention, as he says, "Religion is utterly incompetent to reform the world, till it is armed with some new and most mighty powers—till it appears in a *new* and *last* dispensation."

Our space is exhausted, else we would have had rich pickings of absurdity and weakness in the closing parts of Macau-

\* This was written when the Great Exhibition was going on in London.

lay's Essay—where, for instance, he tells us gravely, "that the knowledge of the theory of logic has no tendency to make men good reasoners," an assertion equivalent to "the knowledge of the theory of grammar has no tendency to make men good grammarians," or, "a man may be a very good French scholar, without studying French;" or where he reduces Bacon's claims to absolute zero, by telling us that his "rules are not wanted, because, in truth, they only tell us to do what we are all doing;" or where, closing his estimate of what Bacon has after all done, he calls him a "person who first called the public attention to an inexhaustible mine of wealth, which had been utterly neglected, and was accessible by that road alone, and thus caused that road which had been previously trodden by peasants and higglers" (Platos and Aristotles? nay, Johns and Pauls?), "to be frequented by a higher kind of travelers." By-ends Bacon, we suppose, Demas Dumont, Save-all Joe Hume, Hold-the-World Bentham, Young Atheist Holyoake, Feel-the-Skull Combe, and My-Lord-Timeserver Mr. Macaulay.

## Miscellaneous Sketches.

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### NO. I.—CARLYLE AND STERLING.\*

THIS volume has, for some months past, been expected, with a kind of fearful curiosity, by the literary public. As for the second shock of an earthquake—after the first had sucked a street into its jaws—so had men, in silence and terror, been waiting for its avatar. Every one was whispering to every other, “What a bombshell is about to fall from Thomas Carlyle’s battery! Nothing like it, we fear, since the ‘Model Prisons.’ Let our theologians look to it!” Well, the book has come at last, and, notwithstanding the evil animus of parts of it, a milder, more tender, and more pleasant gossiping little volume we have not read for many a day. The mountain has been in labor, and lo! a nice lively field-mouse, quite frisky and good humored, has been brought forth. It is purely ridiculous and contemptible to speak, with some of our contemporaries, of this volume as Mr. Carlyle’s best, or as, in any sense, a great work. The subject, as *he* has viewed it, was not great, and his treatment of it, while exceedingly graceful and pleasant, is by no means very powerful or very profound.

In fact we look on it as a clever evasion of the matter in hand. Why were the public so deeply interested in John Sterling? Not on account of his genius, which was of a high, but not the highest, order, and was not at all familiar, in its fruits at least, to the generality. He was not a popular author. His conversational powers and private virtues were

\* Life of John Sterling. By THOMAS CARLYLE.



known only to his friends. But his mind had passed through certain speculative changes, which invested him with a profound and rather morbid interest, and gave him a typical or representative character. He had been in youth a sceptic of rather an ultra school. In early manhood he became a Coleridgean Christian, and an active curate, and ere he died, he relapsed into a modified and refined form of scepticism again. This constituted the real charm which attracted men to Sterling. This was the circle of lurid glory which bound his head, and by which we tracked his steps through his devious and dangerous wanderings.

But of all this there is far too little, although, in another sense, that little is all too much. Sterling's private story is very minutely and beautifully detailed. The current of his literary career (a river flowing under ground!) is as carefully mapped out as if it had been a Nile or a Ganges—a broad blessing to nations. But over the struggles of his inner life, the steps, swift or slow, by which he passed from Radical Rationalism to Christianity, and thence to Straussism or Carlylism, there is cast a veil, through which very little light, indeed, is allowed to glimmer. To show how unfair and unsatisfactory this plan of treatment is, let us conceive a new life of Blanco White, in which all his changes of opinion were slurred over; or a life of Dr. Arnold, in which his achievements as a schoolmaster and a politician were faithfully chronicled, but the religious phases of his history were ignored. Now Sterling's fame is, even more than theirs, based on his reputation as an honest and agonised inquirer, and it is too bad to cloak up the particulars of those earnest researches under general terms, and to give us, instead of the information for which we were panting, pictures of Welsh or West Indian scenery, one or two vague ravings about the "Bedlam delusions" of our day, and the "immensities and eternities"—or letters so selected or so garbled, that they shall cast no light upon the more secret and interesting passages of his spiritual history.

The gentleness of the tone of the work, although only comparative, is an agreeable change from that of the "Latter-Day Pamphlets," the language of which was frequently as coarse and vulgar, as the spirit was fierce, and the views one-sided. The Indian summer is often preceded by a short but severe

storm, and, perhaps, is softer and more golden in proportion to the roughness of the tempest. Mr. Carlyle, here, seems absolutely *in love*! Not above ten sentences of vituperation occur in the 344 pages. We suspect that the reception of the "Model Prisons" has taught him that even *his* dynasty is not infallible, and that bulls from Chelsea must modify their belowings, if they would not wish to be treated like bulls from the Vatican. Whether he be or be not aware of the fact, his giant shadow is passing swiftly from off the face of the public mind, nor will the present change of tone retard its down-going. It is *too late*. The gospel of negations has had its day, and served its generation, and must give place to another and a nobler evangel.

The book is most interesting from its relation to the biographer, and its true name is "Sterling's Carlyle." Few as the religious allusions in it are, they are such as leave no doubt upon our minds as to Carlyle's own views. His sneers at Coleridge's theosophic moonshine—at Sterling's belief in a "personal God:" his suppression of an argument on this subject, drawn out by Sterling in a letter to himself (page 152)—his language in page 126, "no stars—nor ever were, save certain *old Jew ones, which have gone out*"—the unmitigated contempt he pours out here and there on the clergy, and on the Church, and, by inference and insinuation, upon the "traditions" and the "incredibilities" of Christianity—all point to the foregone conclusion, which he has, we fear, long ago reached. With this conclusion we do not at present mean to grapple; but we mean to mark, and very strongly to condemn, the manner and spirit in which he has, although only here and there, stated and enforced it.

Now, in the first place, although he must be sceptical, why should he be profane? He may *curse*, but why should he *swear*? He may despise hypocrisy, and trample on cant, but why should he insult sincere, albeit weak-minded belief? Why such words as these, in reference to a Methodist, who had displayed, in critical circumstances, a most heroic and noble degree of courage—"The last time I heard of him, he was a prosperous, modest dairyman, thankful for the upper light, and for *deliverance from the warth to come*?"

Words these, "wrath to come," which shook the souls of

Cromwell, Milton and Howe, to their depths ; which are still capable of moving millions to fear, to faith, to morality, and to love ; and which yet can only excite Mr. Carlyle to contemptuous derision. If there be one thought in the Christian theology more tremendous than another, it is that of an unceasing outflow of just vengeance, like a " pulsing aurora of wrath," like an ever-rising sun of shame and fear, like a storm, the clouds of which return after the rain—not to be compared to other wrathful phenomena, to the thunder-cloud which gathers, bursts, passes on to other lands or to other worlds, while the blue sky arises behind it in its calm immortality ; nor to the pestilence, which breaks out like the sudden springing of a mine, stamps with its foot, and awakens death, but passes quickly away, and leaves the joy of health and security behind ; nor to the earthquake, which starts up like a giant from his slumber, heaves mountains, troubles oceans, swallows up cities, but speedily subsides, and again the eternal hills rest and are silent ; but to itself only, for it alone deserves the name of wrath ! And without dogmatizing or speculating on the real meaning or extent of this predicted vengeance, surely a sneer can neither explain, nor illuminate, nor prevent its coming ! There are many besides poor Methodist miners, who tremble at the words, " It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and one of them, unless we are much mistaken, is, at times, the melancholy Polyphemus of Chelsea.

Secondly, why does he so often edge his evident earnestness with a levity and a mockery which remind you of Voltaire himself ? Why thus delight in forming an ungainly and horrible hybrid ? Deep solemn thought is on his brow ; love is swimming wildly in his eye ; but a sneer, keen as if it were the essence of all sneers, past, present, and to come, ever and anon palpitates on his lips. Why is this ? Even as an engine of assault, such ridicule is powerless. Laughter, ere it can kill, must be given forth with all one's heart and soul, and mind and strength ; must be serious, and total. But Thomas Carlyle cannot thus laugh at any sincere faith ; his mirth, like Cromwell's speeches, " breaks down," chokes in his throat, or dies away in a quaver of consternation. But why ever begin what his heart will not permit him to finish ?

Thirdly, his contempt for the office of the Christian ministry is so violent, and almost ferocious, as to increase the suspicion that he loves Christianity as little as he does its clergy. He speaks of Sterling's brief curateship as the great mistake of his life—nay, as if it amounted to a stain and crime. It did not appear so to poor Sterling himself, who, when dying, begged for the old Bible he used at Herstmonceux among the cottages, and seems to have died with it in his arms. It does not appear so to us. A curate, however mistaken, "going about doing good," is a nobler spectacle, we fancy, than a soured and stationary *litterateur*, sitting with a pipe in his mouth, and, like the character in the Psalms, "puffing out despite" at all his real or imaginary foes. Sir James Macintosh thought otherwise of ministerial work, when he congratulated Hall on having turned from philosophy and letters to the "far nobler task of soothing the afflicted, succoring the distressed, and *remembering the forgotten*." We have no passion, verily for "surplices," nor respect for many whom they cover; but we know that they have been worn by men whose shoe-latchets neither John Sterling nor Thomas Carlyle are worthy to unloose; and are still worn by some, at least, their equals in powers and in virtues, in scrupulosity of conscience, and in tenderness and dignity of walk. John Sterling would have been a far better, happier, and greater man, had he remained a working curate to the last, instead of becoming a sort of petty Prometheus, equally miserable, and nearly as idle, with a big black crow (elegantly mistaken for a vulture) pecking at his morbid liver. And, for our part, we would rather be a humble city missionary, grappling with vulgar sin and misery, in the lanes of one of our cities—nay, a little child repeating, "Jesus, tender shepherd, hear me," at his mother's knee, than sit with Sartor on his burning and *tottering* throne!

We have something more still to add. We respect and love much about Mr. Carlyle; we think him naturally a great, earnest, true-hearted man. We sympathise cordially with his crusade against shams. We can pardon, or at least wink hard at, the recent outpourings of his wrath against the most eminent of practical philanthropists, tracing them to a foul stomach, and not to a black heart. But we should like him to

"deliver his soul" more even than here, on a topic to which he often alludes, but on which he is never so explicit as he should be—Christianity. We think we know his sentiments on the subject. He does not, we fear, acknowledge its peculiar and divine claims. Seeing clearly that there are but two alternatives, revelation or despair, he has deliberately chosen the latter. The authority of the Bible is one of those things "which the light of his own mind, the direct inspiration of the Almighty, pronounces incredible."

But a large proportion of the public are still in the dark as to his religious sentiments. We have heard him claimed by intelligent ministers of the Free Church of Scotland as a Christian, nay, a Puritan. Others, not quite so far astray, look upon his religious opinions as uncertain, vague, indefinite, perhaps not yet fully formed. This is the fault of his mystic and tantalising mode of expression. Not every eye can pierce through the fantastic veil he wears, and see behind it the features of a mere nature and duty worshipper. That veil, we think, he is, as an honest and earnest man, bound entirely to drop. Masks may be pardoned in a tournament, but not in hot and eager battle. The question as to the truth of Christianity has become the engrossing question of this age, and we cannot now bear with men who appear to halt between two opinions. The cry was never more distinctly or loudly sounded than it is at present, "Who is on the Lord's side, who?" Differences of opinion on minor matters of religion may be pardoned; "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" have become terms equally unmeaning, and equally contemptible. But this is now the point at issue: Is Christianity, as a whole, a truth or a falsehood, a sham or a reality—the lie of the earth, or the one thing in its history worth loving, valuing, or trusting in? While the more resolute of sceptics, such as the worthies of the "Westminster Review," have taken their stand, and proclaimed "war to the knife," and while the defenders of Christianity are buckling on their armor, it will not much longer do for men like Mr. Carlyle to utter an uncertain sound, and to hang off on the outskirts of the great battle. In this "Life of Sterling," its author had a good opportunity of declaring himself fully on the subject, and the

public were expecting it; but they have been again doomed to disappointment.

With regard to John Sterling, there is not very much added to our previous information; but beautiful lights, like the golden gleams of an autumn afternoon, are cast upon his character. His "nomadic" existence—a wanderer in evasion of death—is most picturesquely narrated. Bute, Glamorgan-shire, Madeira, St. Vincent, Italy, and Clifton, all sit for portraits, which are alike faithful and poetic. Old Sterling of the "Times"—"Captain Whirlwind"—comes and goes in a very striking manner. Coleridge sits in Highgate, weaving endless webs of "theosophic moonshine," or walks along both sides of the garden gravel, from uncertainty as to which to take! (Hazlitt, we remember, describes him even when young as perpetually crossing the road, and ascribes it to instability of purpose.) And the various members of the Sterling Club, including Carlyle himself, are introduced at intervals, to add life and interest to the somewhat melancholy and monotonous story.

It is indeed a sad narrative. John Sterling died a young man; but he had passed through ages of bodily suffering and mental endurance. He "lived fast," although not in the common sense of that expression. His life was one hectic fever; and yet his peculiarly buoyant and sanguine temperament enabled him to endure with grace and dignity. His mental struggles, though severe, were not of that awful earthquaking kind which shook the soul of Arnold, and drove Sartor howling through the Everlasting No, like a lion caught in a forest of fire. It was rather a swift succession of miseries, than one deep devouring anguish. Yet the close was truly tragical. How affecting the words of his last letter to his biographer, "I tread the common road into the great darkness without any thought of fear, and with very much of hope. Certainty, indeed, I have none."

He adds, in reference to Carlyle, "Towards me it is still more true than towards England, that no man has been, and done like you." We are tempted to a very opposite conclusion; we think, that unintentionally Mr. Carlyle was the means of mortal injury to Sterling's mind. He shook his attachment to Coleridge, and thus to Christianity; stripping

him of that garment of "moonshine," he left him naked. Shattering the creed Sterling had attained, he supplied him with no other. That Sterling was friendly and grateful to him to the last, is abundantly evident; but that he was satisfied with his position on that cold, Goethe-like, godless crag to which Mr. Carlyle's hand had helped him up, is not so clear; his calling for the Bible in his last hours is against the supposition that he was.\* He took, at least, a Protestant extreme unction. We can almost fancy the stern Sartor in his last moments doing the same; and, as is fabulously reported of Godwin, "making a good end as a Methodist."

The book does not at all modify our verdict of Sterling's literary character. He was rather brilliant than profound; rather swift than strong; rather a man of rare ingenuity and culture, than a man of transcendent genius. He was more of a rapid runner than of a sturdy athlete. His powers were singularly varied and versatile; and though he has left nothing behind him which the world shall not willingly let die, he has done so much, and that so well, as to excite keen regret at his premature departure. We think prose, and not poetry, was his proper department, and that in one region—that, namely, of high and solemn fiction—he would have had few superiors. Mr. Carlyle predicates great things of a poem on *Cœur de Lion*, which he left unfinished. Why is it not given to the world? His "Onyx Ring" is perhaps the best of his productions. In it he shadows forth Goethe and Carlyle as Walsingham and Collins. Both portraiture are true to the life. The polished colossal coldness of the great German, and the wild, unhappy fire of the Scotchman, are made to give and lend illustration and relief to each other. His views of Goethe, Mr. Carlyle affirms, underwent a change, and he died, it seems, a profound worshipper of the "Pagan," as he had previously called him. He might, had he lived, have altered his opinion again. Mr. Carlyle's inordinate attachment to Goethe has always seemed to us inscrutable. It is the fire-king worshipping a gigantic iceberg—a pure man adoring a splendid sensualist—a sincere man admiring a consummate courtier—the

\* Since writing the above, we saw an acquaintance of Sterling's, who assured us that he did *not* die a Carlylist, but a Christian

most ardent worshipping the coldest of all men of genius—'tis verily a great mystery. We can only solve it upon the principle of those marriages where the parties seem to have selected each other on account of their absolute and ideal unlikeness.

We cannot close without adverting again to that topic which has invested Sterling with so much painful interest—his unsettled religion, and the representative he thus becomes of thousands in our day. A few general remarks on this subject must suffice.

That the times in which we live have assumed a dubious and portentous aspect, on the subject of religion, is a fact generally admitted. There are, indeed, still some who persist in closing their eyes to the dangers by which we are environed, and in crying out, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." These men, while listening to the loud masonry of rising churches, to the plaudits of May meetings, and to the far-borne hum of missionary schools, have no ears for the roar of the fountains of the great deep of thought which are breaking up around them, or to the noise of the "multitudes, the multitudes" rapidly convening in the valley of decision. But he who can abstract himself from nearer and more clamorous sounds, and from the pleasing but partial prospects which are under his eye, becomes aware of many and complicated dangers, which seem deepening into a crisis, darkening into a noon of night, above the head of all the churches of Christ. Every one remembers the remarkable passage in Lord Chesterfield's letters, written in France before the Revolution, where he expresses his conviction that he is surrounded by all the tokens and symbols of a falling empire. So it now implies no pretensions to prophetic insight for any one to declare that he lives amid the auguries of a coming religious revolution—to equal which we must travel back eighteen centuries, and which, like that succeeding the death of Christ, has bearings and promises consequences of transcendent importance and unending interest.

The symptoms of this great revolution include the general indefinite panic of apprehension which prevails in the minds of Christians; the increase of a slow, quiet, but profound spirit of doubt among many classes of men; the spread of



Popery (the coming forth of which Beast of Darkness is itself a proof that there is a night at hand); the re-agitation of many questions which, in general belief, seemed settled for ever; the fact that all churches are shaking visibly, some of them, indeed, concealing their tremor under energetic convulsions; the fact that, like those plants which close up at evening, a few of our rigid sects are drawing more closely within themselves; the loosening of the bands of creeds and confessions; the growing disregard to the wisdom, and disbelief in the *honesty* and *word*, of the men of the past; the uprise of a stern individualism and of a personal habit of analysis, which leaves nothing unexamined, and takes nothing on trust; the eagerness with which every innovation is welcomed, and every new cry of "Lo here, or lo there," is heard; the significant circumstance that many from the most diverse classes, the *litterateur*, the inquiring mechanic, the statesman, the youth, the accomplished lady, are united in restless dissatisfaction with our present forms of faith, or in open protest against them; the innumerable defences of the old, which every day sees procreated to leave little or no practical result; the yawning chasm in the public mind, crying out, "Give, give"—a chasm widening continually, and into which no Curtius has hitherto precipitated himself; the hurry of the weaker of the community to plunge into the arms of implicit faith, or of low infidelity, or of hardened indifference; and the *listening* attitude of the stronger and better—of the literary man for his ideal artist—of the student of morals and mind for his new Plato—of the politician for his "coming man"—of the Christian thinker for the Paul of the Present, if not for the Jesus of the Past; such are only a few of the phenomena which prove that the silent frozen seas of an ancient era of thought are breaking up, and that another is about to succeed; that "old things are passing away, and all things becoming new;" and that, moreover, this mighty change will, in all probability, be accompanied by the blackness, and darkness, and tempest, the voices, and thunders, and lightnings, amid which, in every age, great dynasties, whether temporal or spiritual, have been overturned or changed.

"Overturned or changed." These are words on which much depends; and on them we join issue with Mr. Carlyle

and his school. Their cry, open or stifled, is, "Raze, raze it to the foundations." Ours is, "Reform, rebuild." "Fight on in the remaining virtue and strength of the system, till the expected reserve, long promised, come up to your aid." Change, vital and radical, there must be; and the great question with the intelligent is, how far is it to extend; how much of the old is to be left; and how much to be taken away?

This question is too large for our present discussion; but this we must say, that, while we deeply condemn the destructive purpose and spirit of Mr. Carlyle and his party, we have just as little sympathy with those who imagine that Christianity is in a very comfortable and prosperous condition. Surely these men have "eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; they know not, neither do they understand." We seem, on the other hand, to see distinctly the following alarming facts.

First, Christianity, in its present forms, or shall we say disguises, has ceased, to a great extent, to be considered a solitary divine thing. It is no longer with men "the one thing needful." It has come down to, or below, the level of the other influences which sway our age. The oracular power which once dwelt in the pulpit has departed to the printing-press on the other side of the way. The parish church, which once lorded it over the landscape, and pointed its steeple like a still finger of hushing awe; and even the Minister, lifting up a broader hand of more imperative power, have found formidable rivals, not only in the dissenting chapel, but in the private school, nay, in the public house of the village, where men talk, and think, and form passionate purposes over new journals and old ale. Sermons are now criticised, not obeyed, and when our modern Pauls preach, our Felixes yawn instead of trembling. Ministers have for the most part become a timid and apologetic class; the fearlessness of Knox is seldom met, save among the fanatics of their number, in whom it looks simply ludicrous. The thunders of the pulpit have died away, or when they are awakened, it is through the preacher's determination to be popular, or through the agitation of his despair. In general, he consults, not commands, the taste of his audience; and his word, unlike that of his professed Master, is *without* authority, and, therefore, as that of the scribes, nay, less powerful far than theirs. John Howe could preach six

hours to unwearied throngs; twenty years ago, Edward Irving could protract his speech to midnight; but now a sermon of forty minutes, even from eloquent lips, is thought sufficiently exhaustive, both of the subject and of the audience. The private influence of clergymen is still considerable; but it is that of the respective individuals, not of the general class; and where now, in reference to even the best of their number, that deep devotion to their persons, that submission to their slightest words, that indulgence to their frailties, and that plenary confidence in their honesty, which linked our fathers to them, and them to our fathers? a submission and indulgence from which, doubtless, great evils sprang, but which sprang from principles deeper than the evils, and which were rooted in the genuine belief of Christianity which then prevailed.

There are other ills behind. The written documents of the churches have lost much of their influence; always dry, they are now summer dust. What man among twenty thousand in Scotland has read the Westminster Confession; and what man in a million in England the Thirty-nine Articles? The very curses of the Athanasian Creed have become cold, and now cease to irritate, because they are no longer read. Catechisms chiefly rule the minds of children, who do not, however, believe them so firmly, or love them so well, as their fathers when they were children. Even to clergymen such documents have become rather fences, keeping them away from danger, than living expressions of their own faith and hope. They sign, and never open them any more! And thus those unhappy books, although containing in them much eternal truth, although written by men of insight, learning, and profound earnestness, occupy a place equally painful and ludicrous; they are attacked by few, they are defended by few, they are read by none, they are allowed to sleep till an ordination day comes round, and, after it is over, they lapse into dust and darkness again. Sometimes editions of them are placarded on the walls as "reduced in price." Alas! their value, too, is reduced to a degree which might disturb the shades of Twiss and Ridgely. Ancient medals, marbles, fossil remains, nay, modern novels, are regarded now with far more interest and credence than those articles of faith which originally came forth

baptised in the sweat and blood of our early reformers and re-reformers.

Nay, to pass from man's word to God's word, the Bible itself, the book of the world, the Alp of literature, the old oracle of the past, the word of light, which has cast its solemn ray upon all books and all thoughts, and was wont, as the sun evening clouds, to transfigure even the doubts and difficulties which assailed it into embers in its own burning glory; the Bible, too, has suffered from the analysis, the coldness, and the uncertainty of our age. It is circulated, indeed, widely; it is set in a prominent place in our exhibitions; it lies in the *boudoir* of our sovereign, gilded, elegantly lettered, and splendidly bound. It is quoted now in Parliament without provoking a laugh; its language is frequently used by our judges, even when they are trampling on its precepts, and dooming poor ignorant wretches to be "hanged by the neck till they be dead," with sentences from the Sermon on the Mount in their wise and solemn threats. It is sometimes seen on the death-bed of sceptics; when assailed, the attack is generally prefaced by a deep bow of real or apparent respect; such a reverence as might be given by a revolutionist to a fallen king. But *where* is the crown wherewith its Father crowned it? Where the red circle of Sinaitic fire about its brows? Where the halo of Calvary? Where the awful reverence which once ringed in its every page, and made even its chronologies and naked names hallowed and sublime? Where the feeling which dictated the title—which, although not expressly given by God, yet, coming out from the deep heart of man's devotion, might be called divine, and might be compared to God's "naming of the stars"—the "Holy Bible?" Where the thunder, blended with still small voices of equal power, which once ran down the ages, came all from the one Hebrew cave, and which to hear was to obey, and to obey was to worship? Has its strength gone out from it? is it dead, or has it become weak as other books? No; its life, its divine stamp and innate worth, remain; but they are disputed, or only half acknowledged, when not altogether ignored.

Such are a few of the symptoms of our spiritual disease. We have not room to dilate on our conceptions of the remedy. Suffice it at present to say, that our conviction is decided (and

that of the age shall soon come to the same point), that there is nothing more to be expected from Carlylism; that bomb-shell has burst, and its fragments are colored with the blood of John Sterling, and hundreds besides him! The city "No," to use the prophet's language, has been long a "populous city;" but its population must become thinner. The "everlasting Yea," on the other hand, has fair turrets and golden spires; but it is a city in the clouds, abandoned, too, by its builder; there is no such place, either in this world or in that which is to come. There seems nothing for it but downright naturalism, which means flat desperation, or a return to Christianity, in a new, higher, and more hopeful form. We, at least, have made up our minds to cling to the old banner of the cross; expecting that since Jesus has already shaken the world by his accents, as no man ever did, he has only to speak "once more," at his own time, and in the language of the "two-edged sword," which issues from his glorified lips—to revolutionise society, to purify the thrashing-floor of his church, and to introduce that "milder day," for which, in all dialects and in all ages, the true, the noble, the gifted, and the pious, have been breathing their prayers. If we err in this, we err in company with John Milton, and with many, only less than he.

Since writing the first half of our critique, we have read the "Times" on "Carlyle's Sterling." We are, in general, no admirers of that "perpetual Prospectus," that gigantic Jesuit of the press, that Cerberus with three heads, three tongues, and no heart; which can be bribed, though not bought; soporated, but not enticed to the upper air (and the Hercules to drag up this dog of darkness has not yet arrived); but we have for once been delighted with an effusion from Printing-house Square. The thunderbolts are well fabricated, and are strongly pointed at Mr. Carlyle's entirely negative and unsatisfactory mode of thought; at his systematic, though *sub roccæ*, depreciation of Christianity; at the gloomy bile which spots the splendor of his genius; at the charges of "cowardice" and weakness which he dashes in the face of every one who ventures to believe Christianity, or to pray to the Almighty Father; at the deliberate darkness he piles, or at least leaves unmitigated, around the religious creed and last ex-

periences of poor Sterling; and at the fierce and disgusting dogmatism, which is often his substitute for logic, and his *pis aller* for inspiration. But we do not believe, with the "Times" that in this book Thomas's wrath has got to its height; for, in fact, it is mere milk-and-water compared to his "Pamphlets;" nor do we think that his *temper* is his greatest fault; *pride*, according to the measure of a demon, is his raging sin; and no words in Scripture are more repulsive to him than these, "Except a man become as a little child, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." But none *are more true*, and, to a large portion of men, none more terrible.

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## NO. II.—EMERSON.\*

THE fame of Emerson has had a singular cycle of history, within the last thirteen years, in Britain. His first Essays, re-published in 1841, with a preface by Carlyle, were, on the whole, coldly welcomed by the public; with the exceptions of the "Eclectic Review," which praised their genius while condemning their opinions, and "Tait's Magazine," the monthly and quarterly press either ignored or abused them. Their admirers, indeed, were very ardent, but they were very few, and principally young men, whose enthusiasm was slightly shaded with a sceptical tendency. Between this period and his visit to Britain, in 1848, a great revolution in his favor had taken place. The publication of a second volume of Essays, still more peculiar and daring than the first, the re-appearance of his tractate, entitled "Nature"—the most complete and polished of all his works—the deepening enthusiasm of his admirers, and the exertions of one or two of them, who had gained the ear of the public, and were determined to fill it with his fame, as well as the real merit of his writings, had amply pre-

\* The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

pared the country for his approach, when, among the last days of 1847, he set the impress of his foot upon our shores. Then his name and influence came to a culminating point, and ever since they seem to us to have declined. For this, various causes may be assigned.

In the first place, his appearance disappointed many; they did not meet the rapt, simple, dreaming enthusiast of whom they had been dreaming.

Secondly, his Lectures were chiefly *double entendres*. There were alike commissions and omissions in them, which proved this to a certainty. We have seen him scanning an audience ere he resolved which of two lectures he should give. Think of Paul on Mars Hill, balancing between two Greek variations of his immortal speech, or, on consideration, choosing another text than "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye worship DEMONS too much." We have heard of him, too, sacrificing, to suit an audience, the principal pith, marrow, and meaning of a whole lecture; as if, in quoting the words, "thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," he had slyly and *sub voce* substituted the little word "not." Nay, even when there was no such disingenuous concealment or subtraction, there was a game of "hide-and-seek" continually going on—a use of Scripture phrases in an unscriptural sense, a trimming, and turning, and terror at the prejudices of his audience, altogether unworthy of his genius. Indeed, we wonder that the tribe of expectant materialists in England and Scotland, with Holyoake, MacAll, and George Combe at their head, had not, disgusted at the doubled dealing of their American champion, met at Berwick-upon-Tweed, and burned him in effigy. *They*, at least, are direct, and honest, and thoroughgoing men, we mean animals, for they are perpetually boasting of their lineal descent from brutes, and reptiles, and fishes, and slime, and everything but God, and we are not disposed to deny *their* far-come and *dearly-won honors*, or to quarrel, so far as *they* are concerned, with this mud heraldry.

Thirdly, the better portion of the age is fast becoming sick of all systems of mere negation. And what else is Emerson's? Any man who has ever thought for himself is competent to deny, and even to make his system of denial almost impregnable. A child of six or seven is quite able to trace the syllable

No. To use again the allusion of the prophet, "it is a populous city—No;" and assuredly Emerson keeps one of its principal gates. But, with the exception of a mangled Platonism, although he seldom if ever quotes the Greek of Plato, there is not a trace of system, of consistent intuition, of progressive advancement in thought, in all his writings. In one part of them he makes man's soul all; in a second, he makes nature all; and, in a third, he magnifies some shadowy abstraction which he calls the "Oversoul," a sort of sublime overhead negro-driver, compelling men to hell or heaven, as seems good in his own blind eyes. In one place he declares that society never advances, and in another he gives a chart of a Millennium in society which love is by "pushing" to produce. Contradictory intuitions, as he would call them, abound in almost every page, and the question naturally arises, which are we to believe? which of the deliverances of this Paul-Pyrrho, this oracular sceptic, this captive to the "Oversoul," are we to receive as *his*? To refute them were difficult, because, in the first place, it is not easy to see what they are; because, secondly, he often saves us the trouble, by contradicting them in the next page or volume himself; and because, thirdly, while it is the simplest matter in the world to rear or to dwell in the "City No," it is the most difficult matter to overturn it. It is like hunting a dream, or trampling on a shade, or fitting out an expedition to upset Aladdin's palace.

Such are some of the reasons why Emerson's influence over the young, sincere, and liberal minds of the age must rapidly go down—like an October sun, very bright, but which is too late for ripening anything, and which, after a brief meridian, and a briefer afternoon, sinks, as if in haste and confusion, below the horizon. Another reason we are reluctantly, and in deep sorrow, compelled to add—Emerson is *one* of the *few* sceptics who has *personally*, and by *name*, insulted the Lord Jesus Christ, and, through him, that Humanity of which Jesus is the Hope, the Glory, the Ideal, and the Crown. This extreme Carlyle has always avoided, and he has never spoken of Christ, or of the Divine Mystery implied in him, but with deep reverence. Many other of the sublimer order of doubters have been equally guarded. But Emerson, with Julian the Apostate, Voltaire, Paine, and Francis Newman, must



bear the brand of using language to Christ which no man of culture would now apply to a Caesar, a Danton, or a Napoleon. He says, "this *shoves* Jesus and Judas both aside." He speaks, again, of Christ's "tropes," as if the man who died on Calvary because he *would* not lie, was an exaggerator and a rhetorician, when he said, "I and my Father are one," or, "he that has seen me, has seen the Father."

We have heard a dog baying at the moon—we have heard of a maniac spitting foam at the stars—we have watched the writhings of crushed mediocrity as it gazed on the bright pages of genius—and we have understood, excused, pittied, and forgiven all such in their morbid or mistaken feelings. But how one calling himself a man, and reputed really a man of genius, could, in his most unhappy hour, have uttered a word against our Brother—God—the Eternal Child—the Babe in the Manger—the Boy in the Temple—the Carpenter in the Shed—the Weeper at the Grave—the Sufferer on the Cross—the Risen from the Tomb—the Exalted to the Heavens—the Friend by eminence of our fallen Family—the Expected from the Clouds—The Type and Test of whatever is holy, and charitable, and lovely, and lofty in the race of man—passes our conceptions, and has strained to its utmost *our* power of forgiveness.

Why, we must also inquire, has he said such things, and yet not said more of Jesus? "What thinkest thou of Christ?" If he was an impostor, say so. If he was a madman, say so. If he was God in human shape, say so. If he is merely the conventional ideal of human nature, say so more distinctly. If he is neither, nor all of these, then *what is he?* whence has he come? Emerson, while striking hard, and often, and openly, at the divinity of Jesus, and not sparing quiet *sotto voce* insinuations against his character and his power over the minds of men, has never yet propounded or sought to propound any probable or intelligible theory of Christ. He has simply, with muttered, or more than muttered, sneers or sighs over his unacknowledged claims, turned away, refusing to look at or to worship this "great sight."

Man seems the Christ of Emerson. And a sorry Christ he is. "Man," says Bacon, "is the god of the dog;" but were a dog fancying himself a man, it were a supposition less mon-

stronger than the universal Immanuelism of Emerson. If man be the Christ, where are the works which prove him so? If every man has the divinity within him, why are the majority of men so corrupt and malignant? If the history of man be the history of God in human nature, why is it little else than one tissue of blood, falsehood, and low sin? We think he might far more plausibly start and defend the hypothesis that man is the devil; and that his history has hitherto been but a long development of diabolism. And, in proving this, he might avail himself to great advantage of Quetelet's tables, which demonstrate the significant fact, that certain works of a rather infernal character, such as murder, arson, and rape, reappear in steady and mathematical succession, and no more than summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, are ever to cease. The presence of such an eternal law would go far to prove that man was an immutable and hopeless child of hell.

Many strange deductions seem to follow from Emerson's theory, nay, are more or less decidedly admitted by him. If man be the Christ or God incarnate, then there can be no such thing as guilt, and there ought to be no such thing as punishment. Whatever is done, is done, not by God's permission or command, but by God himself. God is at once the judge and the offender. If man be God incarnate, it follows that he is the creator of all things. This Emerson repeatedly intimates. The sun is but a splendid mote in man's eye; the moon is but his produced and prolonged smile; the earth is the shadow of his shape; the stars are lustres in the room of his soul; the universe is the bright precipitate of his thought. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning of the Creation of God, and its ending too. "The simplest person," he says, "who, in his integrity, worships God, *becomes* God." It follows, again, that no supernaturalism ever did or ever could exist. It was, according to Emerson, Moses, not Jehovah, who spoke on Sinai. It was Isaiah's own human soul which saw the fate of empires as distinctly as we see stars falling through the midnight. It was the mere man Christ Jesus, who taught, and worked, and died in Judea. The possibility, in like manner, of any future revelation from heaven is ignored—ignored by the denial of any heaven save the mind of man. This is the dunghill-Olympus on which Emerson seats his shadowy gods.

And whatever strange and aerial-seeming shapes may hereafter appear upon its summit, are to be in reality only sublimated mud—the beauty and the strength of—dirt. “Man,” to use Foster’s language, is to produce an “apotheosis of himself, by the hopeful process of exhausting his own corruptions,” or sublimating them into a putrid holiness.

It follows, again, that whatever he may say in particular passages, there can be no advancing or steady progress in humanity. The laws which develop it are unchangeable, the climate in which it lives is subject to very slight variations; its “Oversoul” is a stern demon, with, perhaps, as he says, “a secret kindness in its heart,” but outwardly a very Moloch of equal calm and cruelty; and under his eye, society and man must work, and bleed, and suffer on, upon this rolling earth, as on an eternal treadmill in a mist. ’Tis a gospel of despair, which in reality he teaches, of the deepest and the most fixed despair. The dungeon into which he introduces his captives is cold and low; it has no outlet: no key called Promise is to be found therein; the sky, indeed, is seen above through the dome, but it is distant—dark—with strange and melancholy stars, and but one hope, like a cup of prison-water, is handed round among the dwellers in this dreary abode—that of Death. And yet, but of late thousands of our young, rising, and gifted minds were, and many are still, forsaking the free atmosphere, the strait but onward way, and the high-hung star of hope, and Christianity, for this dismal, insulated, and under-ground abyss, where the very light is as darkness. It follows, again, that humility and all its cognate virtues are mere mistakes. “Trust thyself—every heart vibrates to that iron string.” A greater than Emerson said, two thousand years ago, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;” and another of the same school said, “When ye are weak, then are ye strong.” We are not defending a false or voluntary humility. But surely, unless you can prove that all strength, and purity, and peace, are enclosed in yourself, to bow before the higher—to draw strength from the stronger—to worship the divine—is the dictate of cultured instinct, as well as of common sense. Almost all the powers and elements of nature combine in teaching man the one great simple word, “Bend.” “Bend,”

the winds say it to the tall pines, and they gain the curve of their magnificence by obeying. "Bend," gravitation says it to the earth, as she sweeps in her course round the sun; and she knows the whisper of her ruler, and stoops and bows before the skiey blaze. "Bend," the proud portals of human knowledge say it to all aspirants, and were it the brow of a Bacon or a Newton, it must in reverence bow. "Bend," the doors, the ancient doors of heaven say it, in the music of their golden hinges, to all who would pass therein; and the Son of Man himself, although he could have prayed to his Father, and presently obtained twelve legions of angels, had to learn obedience, to suffer, to bow the head, ere as a King of Glory he entered in. "Trust thyself." No; Christianity says, "Mistrust thyself—trust God. Do thy humble duty, and call the while on the lofty help that is above thee." Even Shelley, a far more gifted mind than Emerson, tells us, borrowing the thought from Burke, to "*fear* ourselves, and love all human-kind."

It follows, finally, that there seems no hope to us from the exclusive and idolatrous devotion to nature which Emerson has practised and recommends. He, appearing to believe that nature is his *own* work, has conned its pages with all the fondness which a young author feels for his first poems. And yet he has learned from it, or at least taught us, extremely little. If he has, as he says, met "God in the bush," why no particulars of the interview? Why no intelligible precept, no new law from that "burning bush" of the West? Why does nature, in his hands, remain as cold, silent, enigmatic, and repulsive—we mean as a moral teacher—as ever it was? Why does its "old silence" remain silent still, or only insult us with fragments of mysticism and echoes of blasphemy? Alas! Emerson's "Essays" are another proof of what Hazlitt, from bitter experience, said long ago, "Neither poetry nor nature are sufficient for the soul of man." And although Emerson has, with more sever self-purgation, if not with a truer heart, approached the shrine, he has derived, or at least circulated, quite as little of real knowledge, or of real satisfaction and peace, as the honest but hapless author of "The Spirit of the Age."

The fact is (and we are grieved to announce it), this writer

with all his talk about spiritualism and idealism, seems to us, in essence, if anything at all, a mere materialist—believing not, however, in the wide matter of suns and stars, but in the sublimated matter of his proper brain. He has brought the controversy of ages to a point—the point of his own head. This he claps and clasps, and says, “Talk of God, Heaven, Jesus, Shakspeare, the earth, the stars—it’s *all here*.” Even as, not long ago, we heard a poor woman, in fever, declaring that there was “more sense in her head than in all the world besides!” And into what wilds have some of his followers, both in America and here, wandered, till, in search of their master, they have lost themselves. One of them will make an earth-heap among the woods, and show his companions how God *should* make a world. Others take to living on acorns and water; and one lady, of some abilities, has lately written a small volume of poems, in which, amid many other symptoms of the most rabid Emersonianism, such as sneering at the power and influence of the Bible, magnifying the soul, &c., she, in one little copy of verses, avows herself a *worshipper of the Sun*—it being the epic, we suppose, of *her* transcendent spirit!

It is high time that all such egregious nonsense should be exposed; and we only regret that our space does not permit us more fully at present to expose it. We “bide our time.” And we can speak the more freely, that *we* have passed through a section of the Emersonian shadow ourselves—never into its deepest gloom, but along the outskirts of its cold and hopeless darkness. *We*, however, never lost our faith in Jesus, nor regarded Emerson’s notions of Him with any other feelings but disgust and sorrow. *We* never “kissed our hands” to the sun. But we at one time regarded Emerson as a sincere man, astray on one of the by-paths from the road leading up to the “City.” We have seen reason to change our mind, and to say of him, and of all such, “Beware of the Flatterer.” His system, to our knowledge, has shaken belief, has injured morality, has poisoned the purest natures, has embittered the sweetest tempers, has all but maddened the strongest minds, has been for years a thick cosmical cloud between lofty souls and the God of their childhood and their fathers, has not even led to that poor, beggarly, outwardly

clean life, in which he seems to believe all morality to consist (as if the plagues of the *soul* were not infinitely worse than the diseases of the body), and has led to life "without hope and without God in the world." And without laying all the blame of this—and it has been the experience of hundreds—upon Emerson himself, we do advisedly lay it upon the back of his heartless and hopeless creed.

After all this, to speak of Emerson's genius seems mere impertinence. It is little to the point, and, besides, has often been largely descanted on by us and others. It is undoubtedly of a high order. If he cannot interpret, he can paint, nature as few else can. He has watched and followed all her motions like a friendly spy. He has the deepest egotistic interest in her. He appropriates her to himself, and because he loves and clasps, imagines that he has made her. His better writings seem shaken, sifted, and cooled in the winds of the American autumn. The flush on his style is like the red hue of the Indian summer inscribed upon the leaf. One of the most inconsistent and hopelessly wrong of American thinkers, he is the greatest of American poets. We refer not to his verse—which is, in general, woven mist, involving little—but to the beautiful and abrupt utterances about nature in his prose. No finer things about the outward features, and the transient meanings of creation, have been said, since the Hebrews, than are to be found in some of his books. But he has never, like them, pierced to the grand doctrine of the Divine Personality and Fatherhood.

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### NO. IIL—NEALE AND BUNYAN.\*

WHAT is it, it has often been asked, which gives us the strongest and liveliest idea of the infinite? Is it the multitudinous ocean, or the abyss of stars, or the incomputable sand-grains

\* The Pilgrim's Progress of John Bunyan, for the Use of Children in the English Church. Edited by the Rev. J. M. NEALE, M.A., Warden of Sackville College.

upon the sea-shore? No: these, if not numerable by human arithmetic, are taken up by imagination as "but a little thing." She engulfs them easily, and continues to cry, "More, more;" "Give, give." We, of course, can only speak for ourselves, but certain it is that *our* liveliest notion of bottomless depth and boundless extent, is derived from our observation of the *infinity of human impudence*. That is a breadth without a bound, an elevation without a summit, a circumference without a centre, a length without a limit. We are perpetually, indeed, led to imagine that we are nearing its bottom, when lo! some new adventurous genius takes another plunge, and discovers a lower deep beyond the lowest, and we feel that the insolence, bigotry, and folly of a Neale, leave all former absurdity floundering far behind.

This edition of the "Pilgrim's Progress" is unquestionably the most impudent book we ever read. In the infinite of impudence, its author has earned a place similar to that of Sir William Herschel in the universe of stars: like him, he has outstripped all competitors; his folly, like the other's genius, is of a firmamental magnitude, and becomes magnificent from its very originality and daring. Mr. Neale has accomplished the poetical paradox: he has "gilded refined gold, painted the lily, and thrown a perfume on the violet." He has deliberately sat down to improve upon John Bunyan—to add and eke to the "Pilgrim's Progress;" he has converted honest John into a Puseyite, and changed his immortal allegory into a vade-mecum for the babes and sucklings of the Tractarian school. We advise him, when he has leisure, to carry out his plan as follows:—Let him proceed to make Milton, in his "Paradise Lost," teach passive obedience and non-resistance; let him, as a slight change, insert the syllable "in" before the title of Locke on "Toleration;" let him add a book to Cowper's "Task," advocating the damnation of unbaptised infants; let him show us Young, in his "Night Thoughts," defending transubstantiation; let him alter Don Juan to St. Juan, and turn Byron into a devout Methodist; or let him re-write "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and show Eva, on her death-bed, converted to a belief in the divinity of the cart-whip and the auction-block! Not one of these would be a grosser insult to the respective author, or to the public, than is this miserable

emasculatation of Bunyan's allegory. Men who poison wells do so generally by night, and by stealth; but this poor creature sheds his small venom in open day, and raises a complacent cry over it, as if he had done some good and noble action!—Next to the absurdity and positive impiety of the attempt he makes on the life of Bunyan's glorious book, is the silly and consequential insolence with which he avows and defends it.

We say "impiety," for whatever affects the integrity of one of the great classics of the world, especially if that classic be a religious book, amounts to impiety and sacrilege. What should we think of one who should thus practise on the Bible, who should intermeddle with the sublime argument of Job, so as to give it a different turn or termination; who should add his own moral to Jotham's fable; intermingle his own platitudes with Isaiah's divine minstrelsy; and annex his own appendix to the abrupt and crag-like close of Ezekiel's prophecy? We are far enough from placing John Bunyan or his work on the same level with the Scriptures. But his "*Pilgrim*" has long been to millions a minor Bible—a moon circulating round that elder orb. It has lain on the same shelf with the Scriptures, and truly been supposed to breathe the same spirit.—Any attempt to underrate it, or to trifle with it, or to mangle and doctor it, is sure to be resented almost as keenly as an attempt to add to or diminish from the full and rounded glory of the Book of God.

Mr. Neale does, indeed, begin his consummately foolish and impertinent preface, by confessing that he issues "the present edition of the '*Pilgrim's Progress*' with some degree of anxiety"—a feeling which, we trust, on reflection, will be exchanged for a large measure of remorse and shame. He proceeds to answer, anticipatively, some objections to his unheard-of procedure; but, ere doing this, he takes care to inform us, that he "has nothing to say to those professing members of the English Church who would make the theology of Bunyan their own," and that "more than one English priest has, before now, honored this, his great work, with a commentary." Honored! A good idea! A country parson, never perhaps heard of beyond his own parish, or a glib city-lecturer, or a stolid, sleepy-headed bishop, honoring one of the holiest, truest, and most imaginative books in literature with



a commentary! Let us next hear of the honor Caryl has conferred on Job, Todd on Milton, poor Taaffe on Dante, and Rymer on Shakspeare. The English churchman has yet to be born who can be compared, in native genius, in spiritual experience, and in profound piety, with the Baptist tinker, or who could, as from a height above, accord him honor. The highest honor the Rev. J. M. Neale could ever confer on him, he has conferred—namely, detraction and defilement; for, in value to a man of genius, next to the applause of a demi-god, is the censure or the insolent patronage of a dunce.

There are, it seems, some well-meaning members of the English Church, who “look upon the ‘Pilgrim’ as a religious classic, cannot bear the idea of its being pulled about!” and who ask, “Is its doctrine so very false? May not a child read it, without noticing the implied errors? Is not its general end and aim so excellent that minor defects may very well be forgiven?” But no! Mr. Neale has some grave objections to Bunyan’s theology. Although the “Pilgrim’s Progress” is characterised by Coleridge—that zealous churchman—as the best system of divinity extant, it appears to Mr. Neale to swarm with damnable heresies, and sins both of omission and commission. And what, pray, inquires the alarmed reader, *are* these? Has Bunyan denied the Trinity, or the divinity of Christ, or the atonement, or the necessity of divine grace? Has he questioned original sin, or justification by faith, or eternal punishment? No! but he is not perfectly orthodox, according to the Anglican standard, about baptism, confirmation, and the Lord’s Supper! He does not believe that the Holy Ghost is given at baptism to every child; that it is renewed by the imposition of the bishop’s hands at confirmation; and that the “blessed Eucharist is the chief means by which the life thus implanted, and thus strengthened is supported and perfected.” Bunyan—wicked man!—has said nothing about baptism or confirmation, and allows one of his most eminent pilgrims—Faithful, namely—to pass the house Beautiful without entering in! Moreover, the reader will find “the beginning of the Christian life set forth again and again as Conversion.” Many other parts of the story and of the dialogue are exceedingly heterodox, and, to crown all, Bunyan has never heard of the Council of Chalcedon!

How, then, is Mr. Neale to deal with this dangerous book, which lays so little stress upon outward observances, and so much upon inward change; which is so heinously charitable to those who cannot sit down with others at the Lord's table, so fond of repeating the paradox—"except a man be *converted*, and become as a little child, he shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven"—and which a great many excellent persons will not even "allow in their houses?" Shall he not put it at once into an Oxford Index Expurgatorius? or agitate for the entire suppression of all but its Sanscrit translation? or hire the thunders of the Vatican to crush and quell it? Not he! He will act a more generous and liberal part. He will show himself to be a lover of literature and genius, and will sacrifice some of his very serious scruples of conscience to that love. *That* has been, indeed, so strong and discriminating, that it has enabled him to see very considerable merit in this heretical work. It certainly "exerts a fascination over the minds of children." Some of its "particular passages" are "beautiful," one is "worthy (!!) of St. Bernard," and therefore he is "thankful that such a book exists." And then, what a glorious plan he has for putting it all right, and turning the heterodox tinker into a St. Bunyan. It is quite quick and magical. "Presto! begone the Baptist, and enter the Bishop." "One or two insertions, a few transpositions, and a good many omissions," and the thing is done. Suppose we should proceed, according to Mr. Neale's principle, to operate on the Lord's Prayer, how easily we could prove it to be a prayer to the pope, ay, or to the devil! The printer who should omit the "not" in the seventh commandment, and insert it in the fourth, and should so transpose the ninth and the tenth verses of the 20th Exodus, as to enjoin men to rest six days and to labor one, would be but a type of thee, O! J. M. Neale, thou miserable ninny and bigot of the first magnitude!

He is a little sore, however, at the prospect of the ridicule he is rather sure he will meet. He anticipates that his undertaking will be compared to Bentley's edition of Milton. We can assure him that his fears on this point are quite unnecessary. Bentley's book is a "folly of the wise," and shows learning and talent which only the wise could either possess or pervert. Neale's book is the folly of one who, in Touch-

stone's language, is a "fool positive," and is quite characteristic of such an inverted genius. Bentley boldly conjectured what Milton *did* think, but did not write, and altered accordingly. Neale knows what Bunyan did not think, nor write, nor believe, and has made him say it through the three grand magical operations of transposition, insertion, and omission. But what need we say, since "under that kind of ridicule he is to be perfectly easy?" We confess that we envy the stupidity which does not feel, even less than the impudence which provokes an expression of just and righteous scorn. But he adds, "if, as I believe, the work in its original state cannot safely be put into the hands of children, and if, as I also believe, in its present condition it can, I shall have done so good a deed for Christ's little ones, that I may well bear a laugh from those with whom literary merits atone for religious defects." As if all who laughed at him and his book were persons disposed to tolerate religious defects for literary merits; as if the "Pilgrim's Progress" were not valued by one large class less for its literary merits, than as a beautiful and life-like expression of evangelical truth—the creed of Calvin, illustrated by the genius of Shakspeare—and as if that class were likely to approve of omissions, transpositions, and insertions, which extract the very pith and marrow of the book's belief! How Christ's little ones in the English Church may relish this edition we cannot tell; but we rather think that there are myriads of little ones in Britain and America who are quite able to resent the insertion of Neale's nonsense in their old favorite, and that, speaking of the public at large, a "dismal universal hiss" is likely to reward this new enactment of "Hamlet" with the part of Hamlet omitted by special desire.

"Yet" the author "cannot but add" a small depreciatory snarl at the book he is victimising. Its style, indeed, he "most firmly believes," is "on the whole a nervous specimen of pure homely Saxon;" but he is not "pledged"—who ever wished to pledge him?—to "admire every clause, or to think that not a word could be changed for the better." "Colloquialisms are not always ease, nor is vulgarity strength." Certainly not, any more than superstition is piety, or baptism regeneration, or a rabid attachment to forms real religion; but

all genuine lovers of literature know that there is a charm even in the faults of great works, just as there is in the record of the foibles and personal peculiarities of great men, and they would as soon in a portrait of Alexander omit the mention of his wry neck, or turn Napoleon and Suwarrow into grenadiers six feet high, as meddle with one characteristic vulgarism or grammatical slip in Bunyan or Shakspeare. The man is as destitute of taste as of reverence, who stands beside a masterpiece of genius with a microscope in his hand, and employs his leisure in proving that the works of man are inferior to those of God, by discovering its invisible, or exaggerating its obvious, defects. To taste, indeed, Mr. Neale does not pretend, but to reverence he does; and we ask him, in its name, how he would like the same treatment applied to those fathers and those mediæval writers he and his party admire so much, and whose inequalities and defects, in themselves far greater than those of the uneducated Bunyan, are not counterbalanced by a twentieth part of his merit?

But, unquestionably, the most curious paragraph in this refreshingly ridiculous preface is the one that commences thus:—"There is yet one objection. The moral right of altering an author's works is denied to an editor. He wrote and published, it is said, what he believed the truth. To his own Master he has stood or has fallen. What you now teach, and teach in his name, he would have regarded as falsehood; it is dishonest to use his influence, his talents, his popularity, for the purpose of overthrowing his opinions."

This seems very sound reasoning. Indeed, Mr. Neale in personating, though only for a sentence, a man of sense, rises above himself, and reminds us of those actors who, though previously vulgar and stupid, seem to acquire gentility with the parts of the gentleman, and wit with the parts of the clever characters they represent. But mark how he answers it! "A reasonable defence is found in the following consideration:—The author, whose works are altered, wished, it is to be assumed, to teach the truth. In the editor's judgment, the alterations have tended to the more complete setting forth that truth,—that is, to the better accomplishment of the author's design. If the editor's views of the truth, then, are correct, he is justified in what he does; if they are false, he is to be

blamed for originally holding them, but cannot be called dishonest for making his author speak what he believes that, with more knowledge, the author would have said."

It has been our fate to read with complicated emotions of pain, pity, and weariness, thousands of senseless or impertinent paragraphs. But we doubt whether, on the whole, we ever encountered such a master-stroke of absurdity and impudence as the above. It rises to the sublime. By boldly plunging into the bathos, Mr. Neale finds the Alps of the Autipodes.

The thing is such an extraordinary specimen of its class, as to demand rather a minute dissection. The fungus is so filthy, and for a fungus so vast, that we must deal with it as a whole. "The author," he says, "whose works are altered, wished, it may be assumed, to teach the truth." Certainly; but did that truth, in his view, include the semi-papal notions of Mr. Neale? Was not John Bunyan, with all his catholicity, a decided Baptist and Dissenter? "In the editor's judgment," the alterations he has made may indeed "tend to the more complete setting forth of that truth;" but would they in the *author's* judgment? This is the question. Now it is clear that John Bunyan, if retaining his former sentiments, could not approve of Mr. N's tinkering. And who has told our Oxford seer that Bunyan has changed them? He may; but we pause, and shall pause long enough, for the evidence. "If the editor's views of the truth are correct, he is justified in what he does." Stop a moment, Mr. Neale! Suppose you were what you are not, a sage wiser than Socrates, or a prophet as profoundly inspired as Isaiah, would that give you any right to intermeddle with the conscientious convictions even of a child, or to cut and carve on the poorest book which earnestness ever issued to the world? You have just as good a right to steal a man's purse, or to mangle his person, as to mutilate, after such a fashion, his book. "If they are false, he is to be blamed for originally holding them; but cannot be called dishonest for making his author speak what he believes that, with more knowledge, the author would have said." As to Mr. Neale's original views of confirmation—and we care for this just as little as the general public—*his* holding them at least can add nothing to the weight or value of their evidence. But neither we nor the

public will endure that they shall be put into the mouth of John Bunyan, and even seek to share in the immortality of the *chef-d'œuvre* of his genius. We feel "jealous with a godly jealousy" over that book; and, without accusing Mr. Neale of dishonesty in this abortive attempt, we do accuse him of ignorance of the public feeling and taste, of gross misappreciation of his author, of cool impertinence, warm bigotry, and of a stupidity as dense as it is unconscious. *He*, forsooth, "believes that, with more knowledge, Bunyan would have said" the same with himself! How easy it were for hundreds to make a similar statement! We are certain that, while J. M. Neale and Henry of Exeter humbly think that, with *their* light Bunyan would have now been a high churchman, Carlyle imagines that he would have been a Sartorist; Parker, that he would have been a pilgrim on that wretched path of "Christianity without facts"—a path which is recognised neither by heaven nor hell; Dr. Candlish that he would have been a devoted friend of the Free Church; Macaulay, that he would have been, like himself, on religious matters, a nothing-at-all; and more reasonably the Milton Club, that he would have been an honorary member with them. How this age might have altered the mould and shaped the fashion of a mind like Bunyan's, it is hard to conjecture; but we rather surmise that Puseyism would have been his last resort, and that at all events he would now say, were the apparition of *this* edition of the "Pilgrim's Progress" to flash on his view, "Scott I know, Montgomery and Cheever I know, but, Neale, who art thou?"

We have said more than enough of this work and its author, and shall forbear to enlarge on the manner in which he has executed its intolerable design. Suffice it that he has dug a well before the wicket-gate—kicked Sinai out of his road—spirited old Worldly Wiseman away—altered the situation of the cross—given Christian *two* burdens, &c. &c. &c.—in short, written himself down an ass, in characters so large and legible, that Dogberry himself might read them as he ran.

Apologising to our readers for dwelling thus long on such a production—and our only apology is the unique magnitude of the impertinence, and the light it casts on the notions and feelings of a large ecclesiastical party, who have it in their heart to treat all the great protesting literature of the past, including

the Bible itself, as one of their smallest creatures has treated the "Pilgrim's Progress"—we propose to spend the short remainder of this paper in examining a question which springs naturally out of its subject, and which is of considerable practical importance. It is this: What is the legitimate province and prerogative of an editor, in re-issuing classical and standard works? What are the conditions and proper limits of the power which he assumes, or which is conceded to him, over his subject authors?

There are difficulties connected with these questions, and perhaps the following remarks may not be sufficient to obviate them all. We must, however, state them:—An editor, then, of course, is bound to preserve with extreme solicitude the text of his author, exactly as that author left it. He is not, like Bentley, to exercise his ingenuity in finding out new readings, which, in his judgment, are improvements. There were no end to such a system, were it once begun, and its injustice to the author is obvious. Indeed, we value Bentley's edition of Milton as being the *reductio ad absurdum* of the system commentators have so often adopted of cutting and carving, glossing and annotating, upon the great writers of the past. It is ridiculous to see the airs of superiority assumed by some of these wisacres, while dealing with the works of men infinitely superior to themselves. How charily they praise the most marked and striking beauties! How dignified they rebuke! How condescending their patronage! How they ransack the stores of their learning to prove their author a splendid plagiarist, and what an edifying contempt do they discover for all who have gone before them in the same trade of small word-catching and detection of petty larceny! We bid any one who doubts the accuracy of this description to turn to Todd's edition of Milton—otherwise a most praiseworthy book—and glance at the notes of the editor, Hurd, Dyce, Warton, and twenty more, jostling against each other at the foot of the page, till almost every thought and image is traced to other writers, often on the most contemptibly small evidence, and till the text appears literally smothered under the weight of the conjectures, quotations, misplaced learning, and irrelevant discussions of the well-meaning, but wofully-misemployed, commentators.

In all our classics, there occur passages unworthy of their genius, either from their weakness or their wickedness. Now, what are editors to do with these? Some will say that they are not responsible for them, and should therefore print them as they are, perhaps under an accompanying protest. This, we think, however, springs from a false and mechanical notion of what an editor is. His office is not that of a mere printer or amanuensis. We suppose him accepting the task voluntarily, and discharging it as a guardian alike of his author's fame and of his own character. We have admitted above, that there is a certain charm connected with even the faults of good writers, but this is true only when these are intermixed with beauties. There are, on the other hand, pieces entirely and disgracefully bad as literary compositions; and why should such big blots be stereotyped, especially if they are such as cast no peculiar light upon the author's idiosyncrasy, nor mark definitely any stage either in the process or the decline of his mind? An honest editor (if the plan of his publication at all permit) will silently drop such productions from the list.

But his path becomes far more clear in reference to those writings in which vice or infidelity is openly and offensively exhibited. Here his moral sense and religious feelings unite with his literary taste in demanding the use of the knife.—What man, that regards his own character, would edit some of those beastly miscellanies in verse by which Swift has disgraced his talents, and pushed himself almost beyond the pale of humanity, or the Merry Muses of poor Burns, or the blind and raving blasphemies of "Queen Mab?" Such things, it may be said, are valuable as illustrating peculiar traits in eminent characters, or certain stages in their moral history, and should, therefore, be preserved. Well, be it so; only let us be exempted from the sordid and disgusting task of storing them up in those moral museums where alone such detestable abortions are in place, or can hope to remain for ever. The true editor will not shrink from coarseness, but he will from corruption. He will distinguish between faults which are characteristic of an age, and wilful insults to good feeling, or cold, settled attempts to sap the principles of morality, as well as between the language of doubt and darkness, and that of



aggressive and insolent blasphemy. There is at present a rage of genius-worship which would go the length of preserving the very foam of its frenzy, and the very slime of its sin; and there are those who insist that productions which the men themselves regretted and sought to suppress in their life-time, and on which, now, it may be, they look back with shame and horror, shall be bound up in the bundle of their better and imperishable works. These people are constantly prating of the earnestness of Shelley, for example, and asking—Should even the mistaken effusions of such a man be withheld from the world? We say, Yes, if they are rather the ravings of Philip drunk, than the sincere outpourings of Philip sober; if, moreover, they are calculated not only to evince, but to circulate mental inebriety, and if, not satisfied with expressing his faith, they grossly misrepresent, foully belie, and fiercely insult the faith of the Christian world. We are far, indeed, from advocating state prosecutions for blasphemy; we think them machines of unjust power, at once cruel and clumsy; nor will *we* be suspected of undue straitlacedness or of bigotry at all; but we would have public opinion brought to bear, with all its weight, upon the subject. We would seek to crush such unworthy memorials of genius under the silence of universal contempt or pity. We do not wish them mutilated nor extinguished; we wish them preserved; but preserved as other monstrosities are preserved, in secluded corners, on lofty shelves, for the contemplation of those in whom curiosity overpowers disgust, and who can wring a lesson and a moral even from things abominable and unutterable. We are irresistibly reminded of the lines of Milton in his "Battle of the Angels":—

"I might relate of thousands, and their names  
Eternise here on earth; but those elect  
Angels, contented with their fame in heaven,  
Seek not the praise of men: The other sort  
In might though wondrous and in acts of war,  
Nor of renown less eager, yet by doom  
Cancell'd from heaven, and sacred memory,  
Nameless in dark oblivion let them dwell.  
For strength from truth divided, and from just  
Illaudable, nought merits but dispraise  
And ignominy; yet to glory aspires  
Vain glorious, and through infamy seeks fame:  
*Therefore eternal silence be their doom.*"

## NO. IV.—EDMUND BURKE.

ALL hail to Edmund Burke, the greatest and least appreciated man of the eighteenth century, even as Milton had been the greatest and least appreciated man of the century before ! Each century, in fact, bears its peculiarly great man, and as certainly either neglects or abuses him. Nor do after ages always repair the deficiency. For instance, between the writing of the first and the second sentences of this paper, we have happened to take up a London periodical, which has newly come in, and have found Burke first put at the feet of Fox, and, secondly, accused of being actuated in all his political conduct by two objects—those of places and pensions for himself and his family ; so that our estimate of him, although late, may turn out, on the whole, a “ word in season.” It is, at all events, refreshing for us to look back from the days of a Derby and a Biographer Russell, to those of the great and eloquent Burke, and to turn from the ravings of the “ Latter-Day Pamphlets,” to the noble rage and magnificent philippics of a “ Regicide Peace.”

First of all, in this paper, we feel ourselves constrained to proclaim what, even yet, is not fully understood—Burke’s unutterable superiority to all his parliamentary rivals. It was not simply that he was above them ‘as one bough in a tree is above another, but above them as the sun is above the top of the tree. He was “ not of their order.” He had philosophic intellect, while they had only arithmetic. He had genius, while they had not even fancy. He had heart, while they had only passions. He had widest and most comprehensive views ; their minds had little real power of generalisation. He had religion ; most of them were infidels of that lowest order, who imagine that Christianity is a monster, bred between priestcraft and political expediency. He loved literature with his inmost soul ; they (Fox on this point must be excepted) knew little about it, and cared less. In a word, they were men of their time ; he belonged to all ages, and his mind was as catholic as it was clear and vast.

Contrast the works and speeches of the men! Has a sentence of Pitt's ever been quoted as a maxim? Does one passage of Fox appear in even our common books of elocutionary extracts? Are Sheridan's flights remembered except for their ambitious and adventurous badness? Unless one or two showy climaxes of Grattan and Curran, what else of them is extant? How different with Burke. His works are to this hour burning with genius, and swarming with wisdom. You cannot open a page, without finding either a profound truth expressed in the shortest and sharpest form, looking up at you like an eye; or a brilliant image flashing across with the speed and splendor of a meteor; or a description, now grotesque, and now gorgeous; or a literary allusion, cooling and sweetening the fervor of the political discussion; or a quotation from the poets, so pointed and pat, that it assumes the rank of an original beauty. Burke's writing is almost unrivalled for its combination and dexterous interchange of excellences. It is by turns statistics, metaphysics, painting, poetry, eloquence, wit, and wisdom. It is so cool and so warm, so mechanical and so impulsive, so measured and so impetuous, so clear and so profound, so simple and so rich. Its sentences are now the shortest, and now the longest; now bare as Butler, and now figured as Jeremy Taylor; now conversational, and now ornate, intense, and elaborate in the highest degree. He closes many of his paragraphs in a rushing thunder and fiery flood of eloquence, and opens the next as calmly as if he had ceased to be the same being. Indeed, he is the least monotonous and manneristic of modern writers, and in this, as in so many other respects, excels such authors as Macaulay and Chalmers, who are sometimes absurdly compared to him. He has, in fact, as we hinted above, three, if not four or five, distinct styles, and possesses equal mastery over all. He exhibits specimens of the law-paper style, in his articles of charge against Warren Hastings; of the calm, sober, uncolored argument, in his "Thoughts on the present Discontents;" of the ingenious, high-finished, but temperate philosophical essay, in his "Sublime and Beautiful;" of the flushed and fiery diatribe, here storming into fierce scorn and invective, and their soaring into poetical eloquence, in his "Letter to a Noble Lord," and in his "Regicide Peace;" and of a

style combining all these qualities, and which he uses in his Speech on the Nabod of Arcot's debts, and in his "Reflections on the French Revolution." Thus you may read a hundred pages of him at once, without finding any power but pure intellect at work, and at other times every sentence is starred with an image, even as every moment of some men's sleep is spiritualised by a dream; and, in many of them, figures cluster and crowd upon each other. It is remarkable that his imagination becomes apparently more powerful as he draws near the end of his journey. The reason of this probably was: he became more thoroughly in earnest towards the close. Till the trial of Warren Hastings, or even on to the outbreak of the French Revolution, he was a volcano speaking and snorting out fire at intervals—an Etna at ease; but from these dates he began to pour out incessant torrents of molten lava upon the wondering nations. Figures are a luxury to cool thinkers; they are a necessity to prophets. The Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel have no choice. Their thought must come forth with the fiery edge of metaphor around it.

Let us look, in the course of the remarks that follow, to the following points—to Burke's powers, to his possible achievements, to his actual works, to his oratory, to his conversation, to his private character, to his critics, and to the question, what has been the result of his influence as a writer and a thinker?

1. We would seek to analyse shortly his powers. These were distinguished at once by their variety, comprehensiveness, depth, harmony, and brilliance. He was endowed in the very "prodigality of heaven" with genius of a creative order, with boundless fertility of fancy, with piercing acuteness and comprehension of intellect, with a tendency leading him irresistibly down into the depths of every subject, and with an eloquence at once massive, profuse, fiery, and flexible. To these powers he united, what are not often found in their company, slow plodding perseverance, indomitable industry, and a cautious, balancing disposition. We may apply to him the words of Scripture, "He could *mount* up with wings as an eagle, he could *run* and not be weary, he could *walk* and not be faint." Air, earth, and the things under the earth, were equally familiar to him; and you are amazed to see how easily

he can fold up the mighty wings which had swept the ether, and "knit" the mountain to the sky, and turn to mole-like minings in the depths of the miry clay, which he found it necessary also to explore. These vast and various powers he had fed with the most extensive, most minute, most accurate, most artistically managed reading, with elaborate study, with the closest yet kindest observation of human nature, and with free and copious intercourse with all classes of men. And to inspirit and inflame their action, there were a profound sense of public duty, ardent benevolence, the passions of a hot but generous heart, and a strong-felt, although uncanting and unostentatious piety.

2. His possible achievements. To what was a man like this, who could at once soar and delve, overtop the mountains, skim the surface, and explore the mine, not competent? He was, shall we say, a mental camelopard—patient as the camel, and as the leopard swift and richly spotted. We have only in his present works the fragments of his genius. Had he not in some measure,

"Born for the universe, narrow'd his mind,  
And to party given up what was meant for mankind,"

what works on general subjects had he written! It had been, perhaps, a system of philosophy, merging and kindling into poetry, resembling Brown's "Lectures," but informed by a more masculine genius; or it had been, perhaps, a treatise on the Science of Politics, viewed on a large and liberal scale; or it had been, perhaps, a history of his country, abounding in a truer philosophy and a more vivid narrative than Hume, and in pictures more brilliant than Macaulay's; or it had been, perhaps, a work on the profounder principles of literature or of art; or it had been, perhaps—for this, too, was in his power—some strain of solemn poetry, rising higher than Akenside or Thomson; or else some noble argument or apology for the faith that was in him in the blessed religion of Jesus. Any or all of these tasks we believe to have been thoroughly within the compass of Burke's universal mind, had his lot been otherwise cast, and had his genius not been so fettered by circumstance and subject, that he seems at times a splendid generaliser in chains.

3. These decided views, as to the grand possibilities of this powerful spirit, must not be permitted to blind us to what he has actually done. This, alike in quantity and quality, challenges our wonder. Two monster octavos of his works are lying before us; and we believe that, besides, there is extant matter from his pen equal to another volume. What strikes you most about the quality of his writing, is the amazing restlessness and richness of his thought. His book is an ant-hill of stirring, swarming, blackening ideas and images. His style often reposes—his mind never. Hall very unjustly accuses him of amplification. There are, indeed, a few passages of superb amplification sprinkled through his writings; but this is rarely his manner, and you never, as in some writers, see a thought small as the body of a fly suspended between the wings of an eagle. He has too much to say to care in general about expanding or beating it thin. Were he dallying long with, or seeking to distend, an image, a hundred more would become impatient for their turn. Foster more truly remarks, "Burke's sentences are pointed at the end—instinct with pungent sense to the last syllable; they are like a charioteer's whip, which not only has a long and effective lash, but cracks and inflicts a still smarter sensation at the end. They are like some serpents, whose life is said to be fiercest in the tail." It is a mind full to overflowing, pouring out, now calmly and now in tumult and heat, now deliberately and now in swift torrents, its thoughts, feelings, acquirements, and speculations. This rich restlessness might by and by become oppressive, were it not for the masterly ease of manner and the great variety, as well as quantity, of thinking. He never harps too long on one string. He is perpetually making swift and subtle transitions from the grave to the gay, from the severe to the lively, from facts to figures, from statistics to philosophical speculations, from red-hot invective to caustic irony, from the splendid filth of his abuse to the flaming cataracts of his eloquence and poetry. His manner of writing has been accused of "caprice," but unjustly. Burke was a great speculator on style, and was regulated in most of its movements by the principles of art, as well as impelled by the force of genius. He held, for instance, that every great sentence or paragraph should contain a thought, a sentiment, and

an image; and we find this rule attended to in all his more elaborate passages. He was long thought a "flowery and showy" writer, and contrasted, by Parr and others, unfavorably with such writers as Macintosh and even Paine. Few now will have the hardihood to reiterate such egregious nonsense. His flowers were, indeed, numerous; but they sprang out naturally, and were the unavoidable bloom of deep and noble thought. We call the foam of a little river "froth," that of Niagara, or the ocean, "spray." Burke's imagination was the giant spray of a giant stream, and his fancy resembled the rainbows which often appear suspended in it. Besides all this, he had unlimited command of words and allusions, culled from every science, and art, and page of history; and this has rendered, and will ever render, his writings legible by those who care very little for his political opinions, and have slender interest in the causes he won or lost. His faults were not numerous, although very palpable. He cannot always reason with calm consecutiveness. He sometimes permits, not so much his imagination as his morbidly active intellect and his fierce passions, to run him into extravagance. He lays often too much stress upon small causes, although this sprung from what was one of his principal powers—that of generalising from the particular, and, Cuvier-like, seeing entire mammoths in small and single bones. He is occasionally too truculent in his invective, and too personal in his satire. His oracular tone is sometimes dogmatic and offensive; and he frequently commits errors of taste, especially when his descriptions verge upon the humorous; for, Irishman though he was, his wit and humor were not quite equal to his other powers.

We select three from among his productions for short special criticism: his "Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts," his "Reflections on the French Revolution," and his "Letters on a Regicide Peace." The first is probably the most complete oration in literature. Henry Rogers, indeed, prefers the speeches of Demosthenes, as higher specimens of pure oratory; and so they are, if you take oratory, in a limited sense, as the art of persuasion and immediate effect. But Burke's speech, if not in this sense equal to the "Pro Corona," even as Milton's "Arcopagitica" is not in this sense equal to Sheridan on the "Begum Charge," is, in all other

elements which go to constitute the excellence of a composition, incomparably superior. You see a great mind meeting with a great subject, and intimate with it in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and thickness; here diving down into its valleys, and there standing serene upon its heights; here ranging at ease through its calms, and there, with tyrant nerve, ruling its storms of passion and harrowing interest. The picture of Hyder Ali, and of the "Cloud" which burst upon the plains of the Carnatic, has been subjected to Brougham's clumsy and captious criticism, but has come out unscathed; and we venture to say that in massive, unforced magnificence it remains unsurpassed. There is no trick, no heaving effort, no "double, double, toil and trouble," as in many of Lord Brougham's own elaborate passages. The flight is as calm and free, as it is majestic and powerful;

"Sailing with supreme dominion,  
Through the azure deep of air."

His "Reflections" was certainly the most powerful pamphlet ever written, if pamphlet it can be called, which is only a pamphlet in form, but a book in reality. It should have been called a "Reply to the French Revolution." Etna had spoken, and this was Vesuvius answering in feebler, but still strong and far-heard thunder. Its power was proved by its effect. It did not, indeed, create the terror of Europe against that dreadful Shape of Democracy which had arisen over its path, and by its shadow had turned all the waters into blood; but it condensed, pointed, and propelled the common fear and horror into active antagonism with its opponent. It sharpened the sword of the prevailing desire for the fight. It was the first wild, wailing trumpet of a battle-field of twenty-four years' duration. One is reminded of the contest between Fingal and the Spirit of Loda. There seemed, at first, a great disparity between the solitary warrior and the dreadful Form riding upon the midnight tempest, and surrounded with his panoply of clouds. But the warrior was *ipse agmen*—his steel was sharp and true; he struck at the Demon, and the Demon shrieked, rolled himself together, and retired a space, to return, however, again, with his painful wound healed, and the fury of his blasts aggravated, when there was no Burke to



oppose him. The merits of this production are, we think, greatly enhanced by the simplicity of the vehicle in which its thoughts ride. The book is a letter; but such a letter! In this simplest shape of literature, we find philosophy the most subtle; invective the most sublime; speculation the most far-stretching; Titanic ridicule, like the cachinnation of a Cyclops; piercing pathos; powerful historic painting; and eloquence the most dazzling that ever combined depth with splendor. That it is the ultimate estimate of the French Revolution, is contended for by no one. THAT shall only be seen after the history of earth is ended, and after it is all inscribed (to allude to the beautiful Arabian fable) in laconics of light over "Allah's head;" but, meantime, while admitting that Burke's view of it is in some points one-sided, and in others colored by prejudice, we contend that he has, with general fidelity, painted the thing as it then was—the bloody bantling as he saw it in the cradle—although he did not foresee that circumstances and events were greatly to modify and soften its features as it advanced. Let him have praise, at least, for this, that he discerned and exposed the true character of modern infidelity, which, amid all the disguises it has since assumed, is still, and shall remain till its destruction, the very monster of vanity, vice, malignity, and sciolism, which he has, by a few touches of lightning, shown it to be. How thoroughly he comprehended the devil-inspired monkey, Voltaire; and the winged frog, Rousseau; and that iron machine of artistic murder, Carnot; and La Fayette, the republican coxcomb; and that rude incarnation of the genius of the guillotine, Robespierre! Through those strange Satanic shapes he moves in the majesty of his virtue and his manly genius; like a lofty human being through the corner of a museum appropriated to monsters—not doing violence to his own senses, by seeking to include them in the catalogue of men, nor in an attitude of affected pity and transcendental charity;—but feeling and saying, "How ugly and detestable these miscreations are, and, faugh! what a stench they emit."

In a similar spirit, and with even greater power, does he seek to exorcise the evil spirit of his times, in his "Letters on a Regicide Peace." These glorious fragments employed his last hours, and the shadow of the grave lies solemnly upon

them. When he wrote them, although far from being a very old man (he was just sixty-four), yet the curtains of his life's hope had suddenly been dropped around him. It was not that he and his old friends, the Whigs, had quarrelled; it was not that he had stood by the death-bed of Johnson, and had undergone the far severer pang which attended his divorce from the friendship of Fox: it was not that his circumstances were straitened; it was not that his motives were misrepresented; it was not that "misery had made him acquainted with strange bedfellows," and driven him to herd with beings so inferior and radically different as Pitt and Dundas;—but it was that death had snatched away him in whom he had "garnered up his heart"—his son. Be it that that son was not all his father had thought him to be, to others—he *was* it all to him. If not rich himself, was it nothing that his father had lavished on him his boundless wealth of esteem and affection? As it is, he shines before us in the light of his father's eloquence for evermore. Strange and enviable this power of genius! It can not only "give us back the dead even in the loveliest looks they wore," but it can give them a loveliness they never possessed; it can dignify the obscure, it can illuminate the dark, it can embalm the decayed; and, in its transforming splendor, the common worm becomes a glow-worm, the common cloud a cloud of fire and glory, every arch a rainbow, every spark a star, and every star a sun. It can preserve obscure sorrows, and the obscurer causes of these sorrows, and hang a splendor in the tears of childhood, and eternise the pathos of those little pangs which rend little hearts. How De Quincey, for example, has beautified the sorrows, and peculiarities, and small adventures of his boyhood—and in what a transfiguring beam of imagination does he show the dead face of his dear sister, Elizabeth! And thus young Burke sleeps, at once guarded and glorified, beneath the bright angel-wings of his father's mighty genius.

It is most affecting to come upon those plaintive expressions of desolation which abound in Burke's later works, as where he calls himself an "unhappy man," and wishes to be permitted to "enjoy in his retreat the melancholy privileges of obscurity and sorrow;" and where he compares himself to an "old oak stripped of his honors, and torn up by the roots."

But not for nothing were these griefs permitted to environ him. Through the descending cloud, a mighty inspiration stooped down upon his soul. Grief roused, and bared, and tossed up his spirit to its very depths. He compares himself to Job, lying on his dunghill, and insulted by the miserable comfort of his friends. And as Job's silent anguish broke out at last into sublime curses, and his dunghill heaved up into a burning prophetic peak, so it was with the "old man eloquent" before us. From his solitary Beaconsfield, with its large trees moaning around, as if in sympathy with his incommunicable sorrow, he uttered prophetic warnings, which startled Europe; he threw forth pearls of deepest thought and purest eloquence; he blew war-blasts of no uncertain sound, to which armies were to move, and navies to expand their vast white wings; he poured out complaints of sorrow, which melted the hearts of millions; his "lightnings also he shot out," forked bolts of blasting invective, against the enemies or pretended friends, the impostors high or low, who dared to intrude on his sacred solitude; and it fared alike with a Duke of Bedford and a Thomas Paine, as with the rebel angels in Milton :-

" On each wing  
Uriel and Raphael his vaunting foe,  
Though huge, and in a rock of diamond arm'd,  
Vanquish'd Adramelech and Asmadai,  
Two potent thrones, that to be less than gods  
Disdain'd, but meaner thoughts learn'd in their flight,  
Mangled with ghastly wounds through plate and mail.  
Nor stood unmindful Abdiel to annoy  
The atheist crew, but, with redoubled blow,  
Ariel and Arioch, and the violence  
Of Ramiel scorch'd and blasted, overthrew."

But he had not only the inspiration of profound misery, but that, also, of a power projected forward from eternity. He knew that he was soon to die, and the motto of all his later productions might have been, "*Moriturus vos saluto.*" This gave a deeper tone to his tragic warnings, a higher dignity to his prophetic attitude, and a weightier emphasis to his terrible denunciations. He reminded men of that wild-eyed prophet, who ran around the wall of doomed Jerusalem till

he sank down in death, and cried out, "Wo, wo, wo, to this city." In the utterance of such wild, but musical and meaning cries, did Burke breathe out his spirit.

The "Regicide Peace" contains no passages so well known as some in the "Reflections," but has, on the whole, a profounder vein of thinking, a bolder imagery, a richer and more peculiar language, as well as certain long and high-wrought paragraphs, which have seldom been surpassed. Such is his picture of Carnot, "snorting away the fumes of the undigested blood of his sovereign;" his comparison of the revolutionary France to Algiers; his description of a supposed entrance of the Regicide ambassadors into London; and the magnificent counsels he gives Pitt as to what he thought *should* have been his manner of conducting the war. As we think this one of the noblest swells of poetic prose in the language, and have never seen it quoted, or even alluded to by former critics, we shall give it entire:—

"After such an elaborate display had been made of the injustice and insolence of an enemy, who seems to have been irritated by every one of the means which had commonly been used with effect to soothe the rage of intemperate power, the natural result would be, that the scabbard in which we in vain attempted to plunge our sword, should have been thrown away with scorn. It would have been natural, that, rising in the fulness of their might, insulted majesty, despised dignity, violated justice, rejected supplication, patience goaded into fury, would have poured out all the length of the reins upon all the wrath they had so long restrained. It might have been expected, that, emulous of the glory of the youthful hero (Archduke Charles of Austria) in alliance with him, touched by the example of what one man, well formed and well placed, may do in the most desperate state of affairs, convinced there is a courage of the cabinet full as powerful, and far less vulgar, than that of the field, our minister would have changed the whole line of that useless prosperous prudence, which had hitherto produced all the effects of the blindest temerity. If he found his situation full of danger, (and I do not deny that it is perilous in the extreme), he must feel that it is also full of glory, and that he is placed on a stage, than which no muse of fire, that had ascended the highest heaven of inven-

tion, could imagine anything more awful and august. It was hoped that, in this swelling scene in which he moved, with some of the first potentates of Europe for his fellow-actors, and with so many of the rest for the anxious spectators of a part which, as he plays it, determines for ever their destiny and his own, like Ulysses in the unravelling point of the epic story, he would have thrown off his patience and his rags together, and, stripped of unworthy disguises, he would have stood forth in the form and in the attitude of a hero. On that day it was thought he would have assumed the port of Mars; that he would have bid to be brought forth from their hideous kennel (where his scrupulous tenderness had too long immured them) those impatient dogs of war, *whose fierce regards affright even the minister of vengeance that feeds them*; that he would let them loose, in famine, fever, plagues, and death, upon a guilty race, to whose frame, and to all whose habit, order, peace, religion, and virtue are alien and abhorrent. It was expected that he would at last have thought of active and effectual war; that he would no longer amuse the British lion in the chase of rats and mice; that he would no longer employ the whole naval power of Great Britain, once the terror of the world, to prey upon the miserable remains of a peddling commerce, which the enemy did not regard, and from which none could profit. It was expected that he would have re-asserted the justice of his cause; that he would have re-animated whatever remained to him of his allies, and endeavored to recover those whom their fears had led astray; that he would have rekindled the martial ardor of his citizens; that he would have held out to them the example of their ancestry, the asserter of Europe, and the scourge of French ambition; that he would have reminded them of a posterity, which, if this nefarious robbery, under the fraudulent name and false color of a government, should in full power be seated in the heart of Europe, must for ever be consigned to vice, impiety, barbarism, and the most ignominious slavery of body and mind. In so holy a cause, it was presumed that he would (as in the beginning of the war he did) have opened all the temples, and with prayer, with fasting, and with supplication (better directed than to the grim Moloch of regicide in France), have called upon us to raise

that united cry which has so often stormed heaven, and *with a pious violence, forced down blessings upon a repentant people.* It was hoped that, when he had invoked upon his endeavors the favorable regards of the Protector of the human race, it would be seen that his menaces to the enemy, and his prayers to the Almighty, were not followed, but accompanied, with corresponding action. It was hoped that his shrilling trumpet should be heard, not to announce a show, but to sound a charge."

We come now to him as an orator. And here we must correct a prevailing misconception. Many seem to imagine that he had no power of oratorical impression; that he was a mere "dinner-bell;" and that his speeches, however splendid, fell still-born from his lips. So far was this from being the case, that his very first orations in Parliament—those, namely, on the Stamp Act—delivered when he had yet a reputation to make, according to Johnson, "filled the town with wonder;" an effect which, we fancy, their mere merit, if unaccompanied by some energy and interest of delivery, could hardly have produced. So long as he was in office under Lord Rockingham, and under the Coalition Ministry, he was listened to with deference and admiration. His speech against Hastings was waited for with greater eagerness, and heard with greater admiration, than any of that brilliant series, except, perhaps, Sheridan's on the Begum Charge; and in its closing passage, impeaching Hastings "in the name of Human Nature itself," it rose, even as to effect, to a height incomparably above any of the rest. His delivery, indeed, and voice were not first rate, but only fribbles or fools regard such things much, or at least long, in a true orator; and when Burke became fully roused, his minor defects were always either surmounted by himself, or forgotten by others. The real secret of his parliamentary unpopularity, in his latter years, lay, first, in the envy with which his matchless powers were regarded; secondly, in his fierce and ungovernable temper, and the unguarded violence of his language; thirdly, in the uncertainty of his position and circumstances; and, lastly, in the fact, as Johnson has it, that "while no one could deny that he spoke well, yet all granted that he spoke too often and too long. His soul,

besides, generally soared above his audience, and sometimes forgot to return. In honest Goldsmith's version of it,

"Too deep for his hearers, he went on refining,  
And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining."

But he could never be put down to the last, and might, had he chosen, have contested the cheap palm of instant popularity even with the most voluble of his rivals. But the "play was not worth the candle." He mingled, indeed, with their temporary conflicts; but it was like a god descending from Ida to the plains of Troy, and sharing in the vulgar shock of arms, with a high celestial purpose in view. He was, in fact, over the heads of the besotted parliaments of his day, addressing the ears of all future time, and has not been inaudible in *that* gallery.

Goldsmith is right in saying that so far he "narrowed his mind." But, had he narrowed it a little farther, he could have produced so much the more of immediate impression, and so much the more have circumscribed his future influence and power. He *was* by nature what Cloutz pretended to be, and what all genuine speakers should aim at being, "an orator of the human race," and he never altogether lost sight of this his high calling. Hence, while a small class adored him, and a large class respected, the majority found his speaking apart from their purpose, and if they listened to it, it was from a certain vague impression that it was something great and splendid, only not very intelligible, and not at all practical. In fact, the brilliance of his imagination, and the restless play of his ingenuity, served often to conceal the solid depth and practical bearings of his wisdom. Men seldom give a famous man credit for all the faculties he possesses. If they dare not deny his genius, they deny his sense; or, if they are obliged to admit his sense, they question his genius. If he is strong, he cannot be beautiful, and if beautiful, he must be weak. That Burke suffered much from this false and narrow style of criticism, is unquestionable; but that he was ever the gigantic bore on the floor of the House of Commons which some pretend, we venture to doubt. The fact was probably this—on small matters he was thought prosy, and coughed down, but, whenever there was a large load to be lifted, a great question to be

discussed—a Hastings to be crushed, or a French revolution to be analysed—the eyes of the house instinctively turned to the seat where the profound and brilliant man was seated, and their hearts irresistibly acknowledged, at times, what their tongues and prejudices often denied.

And yet it is amusing to find, from a statement of Burke's own, that the Whigs whom he had deserted solaced themselves for the unparalleled success of the "Reflections on the French Revolution," by underrating it in a literary point of view. Is this the spirit of real or of mock humility in which he speaks, in his "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs?" "The gentlemen who in the name of the party have passed sentence on Mr. Burke's book in the light of literary criticism, are judges above all challenge. He did not indeed flatter himself that as a writer, he could claim the approbation of men whose talents, in his judgment and in the public judgment, approach to prodigies, if ever such persons should be disposed to estimate the merit of a composition upon the standard of their own ability." Surely this must be ironical, else it would seem an act of voluntary humility as absurd as though De Quincey were deferring in matters of philosophy or style to the "superior judgment" of some of our American or St. Andrews made doctors; or as though Mrs. Stowe were to dedicate her next novel to the author of the "Coming Struggle." Pretty critics they were! Think of the glorious eloquence, wisdom, passion, and poetry, the "burning coals of juniper, sharp arrows of the strong," to be found in every page of the "Reflections," sincere as by two men, at least, not one of whose works is now read—by the writer of a farrago like the "Spital Sermon," or by the author of such illegible dulness as the "History of James II.," or even by Sheridan, with his clever heartless plays, and the brilliant falsetto of his speeches; or even by MacIntosh, with the rhetorical logic and forced flowers of his "Vindiciæ Gallicæ." Surely Burke did, in his heart, appeal from their tribunal to that of a future age. To do MacIntosh justice, he learned afterwards to form a far loftier estimate of the author of the "Reflections." He was, soon after the publication of his "Vindiciæ Gallicæ," invited to spend some days at Beaconsfield. There he found the old giant, now toying on the carpet with little children, now cracking bad jokes



and the vilest of puns, and now pouring out magnificent thoughts and images. In the course of a week's animated discussion on the French Revolution, and many cognate subjects, MacIntosh was completely converted to Burke's views, and came back impressed with an opinion of his genius and character, far higher than his writings had given him. Indeed, his speech in defence of Peltier—by much the most eloquent of his published speeches—bears on it the fiery traces of the influence which Burke had latterly exerted on his mind. The early sermons, too, and the "Apology for the Liberty of the Press," by Hall, are less colored, than created by the power which Burke's writings had exerted on his dawning genius. But more of this afterwards.

What a pity that Boswell had not been born a twin, and that the brother had not attached himself as fondly and faithfully to Burke, as Jemmy to Johnson! Boswell's Life of Burke would *now* have been even more popular than Boswell's Life of Johnson. For, if Johnson's sayings were more pointed and witty, Burke's were profounder and sublimer far. Johnson had lived as much with books and with certain classes of men, but Burke had conversed more with the silent company of thoughts; and all grand generalisations were to him palpable, familiar, and life-like as a gallery of pictures. Johnson was a lazy, slumbering giant, seldom moving himself except to strangle the flies which buzzed about his nostrils; Burke wrought like a Cyclops in his cave. Johnson, not Burke, was the master of amplification, from no poverty, but from indolence: he often rolled out sounding surges of commonplace, with no bark and little beauty, upon the swell of the wave: Burke's mind, as we have seen before, was morbidly active; it was impatient of circular movement round an idea, or of noise and agitation without progress: his motto ever was "Onwards," and his eloquence always bore the stamp of thought. Johnson looked at all things through an atmosphere of gloom: Burke was of a more sanguine temperament; and if cobwebs did at any time gather, the breath of his anger or of his industry speedily blew them away. Johnson had mingled principally with scholars, or the middle class of community; Burke was brought early into contact with statesmen, the nobility and gentry, and this told both upon his private manners and upon

his knowledge of human nature. Johnson's mind was of the sharp, strong, sturdy order; Burke's of the subtle, deep, revolving sort; as Goldsmith said, he "wound into every subject like a serpent." Both were honest, fearless, and pious men; but, while Burke's honesty sometimes put on a court dress, and his fearlessness sometimes "licked the dust," and his piety could stand at ease, Johnson in all these points was ever roughly and nakedly the same. Johnson, in wit, the point of individual sentences, and in solemn pictures of human life, its sorrows and frailties, was above Burke; but was as far excelled by him in power of generalisation, vastness of range and reading, exuberance of fancy, daring rhetoric, and in skilful management and varied cadence of style. Johnson had a philosophical vein, but it had never received much culture; Burke's had been carefully fed, and failed only at times through the subjects to which it was directed. Johnson's talk, although more brilliant, memorable, and imposing was also more set, starched, and produced with more effort than Burke's, who seemed to talk admirably because he could not help it, or, as his great rival said, "because his mind was full." Johnson was, notwithstanding his large proportions, of the earth earthy, after all; his wings, like those of the ostrich, were not commensurate with his size; Burke, to vast bulk and stature, added pinions which bore him from peak to peak, and from one gorgeous tract of "cloudland" to another.

Boswell and Prior have preserved only a few specimens of Burke's conversation, which are, however, so rich as to excite deep regret that more has not been retained; and a conviction that his traditional reputation has not been exaggerated, and that his talk was the truest revelation of his powers. Every one knows the saying of Dr. Johnson, that you could not go with Burke under a shed to shun a shower, without saying, "this is an extraordinary man." Nor was this merely because he could talk cleverly and at random on all subjects, and hit on brilliant things; but that he seemed to have weighed and digested his thoughts, and prepared and adjusted his language on all subjects, at the same time that impulse and excitement were ever ready to sprinkle splendid impromptus upon the stream of his speech. He combined the precision and perfect preparation of the lecturer with the ease and fluency of the

conversationist. He did not, like some, go on throwing out shining paradoxes; or, with others, hot gorgeous metaphors, hatched between excitement and vanity; or, with others, give prepared and polished orations, disguised in the likeness of extempore harangues; or, with others, perpetually strive to startle, to perplex, to mystify, and to shine. Burke's talk was that of a thoroughly furnished, gifted, and profoundly informed man *thinking aloud*. His conversation was just the course of a great, rich river, winding at its sweet or its wild will—always full, often overflowing; sometimes calm, and sometimes fretted and fierce; sometimes level and deep, and sometimes starred with spray, or leaping into cataracts; sometimes rolling through rich alluvial plains, and sometimes through defiles of romantic interest. Who shall venture to give us an "Imaginary Conversation" between him and Johnson, on the subject referred to by Boswell, about the comparative merits of Homer and Virgil, or on some similar topic, in a style that shall adequately represent the point, roughness, readiness, and sense of the one, and the subtlety, varied knowledge, glares of sudden metaphoric illumination crossing the veins of profound reflection, which distinguished the other—the "no, sirs," and the "therefores" of the one, with the "buts," the "unlesses," and the terrible "excuse me, sirs." of the other? We wonder that Savage Landor has never attempted it, and brought in poor Burns—the only man then living in Britain quite worthy to be a third party in the dialogue—now to shed his meteor light upon the matter of the argument; and now, by his wit or song, to soothe and harmonise the minds of the combatants.

Burke's talk is now, however, as a whole, irrecoverably lost. What an irrepressible sigh escapes us, as we reflect that this is true of so many noble spirits! Their works may remain with us, but that fine aroma which breathed in their conversation, that inspired beam which shone in their very eyes, are for ever gone. Some of the first of men, indeed, have had nothing to lose in this respect. Their conversation was inferior to their general powers. Their works were evening shadows more gigantic than themselves. We have, at least, their essence preserved in their writings. This probably is true even of Shakspeare and Milton. But Johnson, Burke, Burns,

and Coleridge, were so constituted, that conversation was the only magnet that could draw out the full riches of their genius; and all of them would have required each his own Siamese twin to have accompanied him through life, and, with the pen and the patience of Bozzy, to have preserved the continual outpourings of their fertile brains and fluent tongues. We are not, however, arguing their superiority to the two just mentioned, or to others of a similar stamp, whose writings were above their talk—far the reverse—but are simply asserting that we may regret more the comparative meagreness of biography in the case of the one class than of the other.

Burke, in private, was unquestionably one of the most blameless of the eminent men of his day. He was, in all his married life at least, entirely free from the licentiousness of Fox, the dissipation of Sheridan, and the hard-drinking habits of Pitt. But he was also the most amiable and actively benevolent of them. Wise as a serpent, he was harmless as a dove; and, when the deep sources of his indignation were not touched, gentle as a lamb. Who has forgot his fatherly interest in poor Crabbe—that flower blushing and drooping unseen, till Burke lifted it up in his hand, and gave his protégé bread and immortality? or his kindness to rough, thankless Barry, whom he taught and counselled as wisely as if he had been a prophet of art, not politics, and as if he had studied nothing else but painting (proving thus, besides his tender heart, that a habit and power of deep and genuine thinking can easily be transferred from one branch to all—a truth substantiated, besides, by the well-known aid he gave Sir Joshua Reynolds in his lectures); or last, not least, his Good Samaritan treatment of the wretched street-stroller he met, took home, introduced, after hearing her story, to Mrs. Burke, who watched over, reformed, and employed her in her service? “These are deeds which must not pass away.” Like green laurels on the bald head of a Cæsar, they add a beauty and softness to the grandeur of Burke’s mind, and leave you at a loss (fine balance! rare alternative! compliment, like a biforked sunbeam, cutting two ways!) whether more to love or to admire him. Fit it was that he should have passed that noble panegyric on Howard, the “Circumnavigator of Charity,” which now stands, and shall long stand

like a mountain before its black and envious shadow, over against Carlyle's late unhappy attack on the unrivalled philanthropist.

We promised a word on Burke's critics. They have been numerous and various. From Johnson, Fox, Laurence, Macintosh, Wordsworth, Brougham, Hazlitt, Macaulay, De Quincey, Croly, H. Rogers, &c., down to Prior, &c. Johnson gave again and again his sturdy verdict in his favor, which was more valuable then than it is now. "If I were," he said, when once ill and unable to talk, "to meet that fellow Burke to-night, it would kill me." Fox admitted that he had learned more from Burke's conversation than from all his reading and experience put together. Laurence, one of his executors, has left recorded his glowing sense of his friend's genius and virtues. Of Macintosh's admiration we have spoken above: although, in an article which appeared in the "Edinburgh Review," somewhere in 1830, he seems to modify his approbation; induced to this, partly, perhaps, by the influences of Holland House, and partly by those chills of age which, falling on the higher genius and nature of Burke, served only to revive and stimulate him, but which damped whatever glow Macintosh once had. Wordsworth's lofty estimate is given in Lord John Russell's recent Biography of Moore, and serves not only to prove what his opinion was, but to establish a strong distinction between the mere *dilettante litterateur* like Canning, and the mere statesman like Pitt, and a man who, like Burke, combined the deepest knowledge of politics and the most unaffected love for literature and literary men. Brougham's estimate, in his "Statesmen," &c., is not exactly unfair, but fails, first, through his lordship's profound unlikeness, in heart, habits, kind of culture, taste, and genius, to the subject of his critique—(Burke, to name two or three distinctions, was always a careful, while Brougham is often an extempore, thinker. Burke is a Cicero, and something far more; Brougham aspires to be a Demosthenes, and is something far less. Burke reasons philosophically—a mode of ratiocination which, as we have seen, can be employed with advantage on almost all subjects; Brougham reasons geometrically, and is one of those who, according to Aristotle, are sure to err when they turn their mathematical method to

moral or mental themes. Burke's process of thought resembles the swift synthetic algebra; Brougham's, the slow, plodding, geometric analysis. Burke had prophetic insight, earnestness, and poetic fire; Brougham has marvellous acuteness, the earnestness of passion, and the fire of temperament. Burke had genuine imagination; Brougham has little or none; and, second, through his prodigious exaggerations of Burke's rivals, who, because they were near and around, appear to him cognate and equal, if not superior; even as St. Peter's is said to be lessened in effect by some tall but tasteless buildings in the neighborhood; and as the giant Ben Macdhui was long concealed by the lofty but subordinate hills which crush in around him. Hazlitt, Macaulay, and De Quincey have all seen Burke in a truer light, and praised him in the spirit of a more generous and richer recognition. Hazlitt has made, he tells us, some dozen attempts to describe Burke's style, without pleasing himself—so subtle and evasive he found its elements, and so strange the compound in it of matter-of-fact, speculation, and poetic eloquence. His views of him, too, veered about several times—at least they seem very different in his papers in the "Edinburgh Review," and in his acknowledged essays; although we believe that at heart he always admired him to enthusiasm, and is often his unconscious imitator. Macaulay has also a thorough appreciation of Burke, the more that he is said to fancy—it is nothing more than a fancy—that there is a striking resemblance between his hero and himself! De Quincey, following in this Coleridge, has felt, and eloquently expressed, his immeasurable contempt for those who praise Burke's fancy at the expense of his intellect. Dr. Croly has published a "Political Life of Burke," full of eloquence and fervid panegyric, as well as of strong discrimination; Burke is manifestly his master, nor has he found an unworthy disciple. Henry Rogers has edited and prefaced an edition of Burke's works, but the prefixed essay, although able, is hardly worthy of the author of "Reason and Faith," and its eloquence is of a laborious, mechanical sort. And Hall has, in his "Apology for the Liberty of the Press," which was in part a reply to the "Reflections," painted him by a few beautiful touches, less true, however, than they are beautiful; and his pamphlet, although carefully modelled on

the writings of his opponent, is not to be named beside them in depth, compass of thought, richness of imagery, or variety and natural vigor of style; his splendor, compared to Burke's, is stiff; his thinking and his imagery imitative—no more than in the case of Macaulay do you ever feel yourself in contact with a "great virgin mind," melting down through the heat and weight of its own exhaustless wealth, although, in absence of fault, stateliness of manner and occasional polished felicities of expression, Hall is superior even to Burke.

That Burke *was* Junius, we do not believe: but that Burke HAD TO DO with the composition of some of these celebrated letters, we are as certain as if we had seen his careful front, and dim, but searching eyes looking through his spectacles over the MS. He was notoriously (see Prior's Life) in the secret of their authorship. Johnson thought him the only man then alive capable of writing them. Hall's objection, that "Burke's great power was amplification, while that of Junius was condensation," sprung, we think, from a totally mistaken idea of the very nature of Burke's mind. There is far more condensed thinking and writing in many parts of Burke than in Junius—the proof of which is, that no prose writer in the language, except, perhaps, Dean Swift, has had so many single sentences so often quoted. That the *motion* of the mind of Junius differs materially from Burke's, is granted; but we could account for this (even although we contended, which we do not, that he was the sole author), from the awkwardness of the position in which the Anonymous would necessarily place him. He would become like a man writing with his left hand. The mask would confine as well as disguise him. He durst not venture on that free and soaring movement which was natural to him. Who ever heard of a man in a mask swaying a broadsword? He always uses a stiletto, or a dagger. Many of the best things in "Junius" are in one of Burke's manners; for, as we have seen, many manners and styles were his. He said to Boswell, in reference to Croft's "Life of Young," "It is not a good imitation of Johnson: he has the nodosities of the oak, without its strength—the contortions of the sibyl, without her inspiration." Junius says of Sir W. Draper, "He has all the melancholy madness of poetry, without the inspiration." How

like to many sentences in Burke are such expressions as these (speaking of Wilkes):—"The gentle breath of peace would leave him on the surface, unruffled and unremoved; it is only the tempest which lifts him from his place." We could quote fifty pithy sentences from Junius and from Burke, which, placed in parallel columns, would convince an unprejudiced critic that they came from the same mind.\* It is the union in both of point, polish, and concentration—a union reminding you of the deep yet shining sentences of Tacitus—that establishes the identity. Junius has two salts in his style—the *sal acridum*, and the *sal Atticum*. Sir Philip Francis was equal to the supply of the first; Burke alone to that of the second. It adds to the evidence for this theory, that Burke was fond of anonymous writing, and that in it he occasionally "changed his voice," and personated other minds: think of his "Vindication of Natural Society in the Manner of Lord Bolingbroke." He often, too, assisted other writers *sub rosa*, such as Barry and Reynolds, in their prelections on painting. We believe, in short, this to be the truth on the subject: he was in the confidence of the Junius Club—for a club it certainly was; he overlooked many of the letters (Prior asserts that he once or twice spoke of what was to be the substance of a letter the day before it appeared); and he supplied many of his inimitable touches, just as Lord Jeffrey was wont to add spice even to some of Hazlitt's articles in the "Edinburgh Review." So that he could thus very safely and honestly deny, as he repeatedly did, that he was the author of Junius, and yet be connected with the authorship of the letters.

\* Amid the innumerable full-grown beauties, or even hints of beauties, borrowed by after-writers from Burke, we have just noticed one, which MacIntosh, in his famous letter to Hall, has appropriated without acknowledgment. It is where he speaks of Hall turning from literature, &c., to the far nobler task of "*remembering the forgotten*," &c. This grand simplicity, of which MacIntosh was altogether incapable, may be found in Burke's panegyric on Howard. Indeed, we wish we had time to go over Burke's works, and to prove that a vast number of the profound or brilliant things that have since been uttered (disguised or partially altered), in most of our favorite writers on grave subjects, present and past, are *stolen* from the great fountain mind of the eighteenth century. We may do so on some future occasion; and let the plagiarists tremble! Enough at present.



We come, lastly, to speak of the influence which Burke has exerted upon his and our times. This has been greater than most even of his admirers believe. He was one of the few parent minds which the world has produced. Well does Burns call him "*Daddie* Burke." And both politics and literature owe filial obligations to his unbounded genius. In politics he has been the father of moderate Conservatism, which is, at least, a tempering of Toryism, if not its sublimation. That conservatism in politics and in church matters exists now in Britain, is, we believe, mainly owing to the genius of two men—Burke and Coleridge. In literature, too, he set an example that has been widely followed. He unintentionally, and by the mere motion of his powerful mind, broke the chains in which Johnson was binding our style and criticism, without, however, going back himself, or leading back others, to the laxity of the Addisonian manner. All good and vigorous English style since—that of Godwin, that of Foster, that of Hall, that of Horsley, that of Coleridge, that of Jeffrey, that of Hazlitt, that of De Quincey, that of the "*Times*" newspaper—are much indebted to the power with which Burke stirred the stagnant waters of our literature, and by which, while professedly an enemy of revolutions, he himself established one of the greatest, most beneficial, and most lasting—that, namely, of a new, more impassioned, and less conventional mode of addressing the intellects and hearts of men.

Latterly, another change has threatened to come over us. Some men of genius have imported from abroad a mangled and mystic Germanism, which has been for awhile the rage. This has not, however, mingled kindly with the current of our literature. The philosophic language of jargon—and it is partly both—of the Teutons has not been well assimilated, or thoroughly digested among us. From its frequent and affected use, it is fast becoming a nuisance. While thinkers have gladly availed themselves of all that is really valuable in its terminology, pretenders have still more eagerly sought shelter for their conceit or morbid weakness under its shield. The stuff, the verbiage, the mystic bewilderment, the affectation, the disguised commonplace, which every periodical almost now teems with, under the form of this foreign phraseology, are enormous, and would require a Swift, in a new "*Tale of a*

Tub," or "Battle of the Books," to expose them. We fancy, however, we see a re-action coming. Great is the Anglo-Saxon, the language of Shakspeare and Byron, and it shall yet prevail over the feeble refinements of the small mimics of the Teutonic giants. Germany was long Britain's humble echo and translator. Britain, please God! shall never become *its* shadow. Our thought, too, and faith, which have suffered from the same cause, are in due time to recover; nay, the process of restoration is begun. And among other remedies for the evil, while yet it in a great measure continues, we strongly recommend a recurrence to the works of our great classics in the past; and, among their bright list, let not *him* be forgotten, who, apart from his genius, his worth, and his political achievements, has in his works presented so many titles to be considered not only as the *facile princeps* among the writers of his own time (although this itself were high distinction), but as one of the first authors who, in any age or country, ever speculated or wrote.

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#### NO. V.—EDGAR A. POE.

WE have sometimes amused ourselves by conjecturing—Had the history of human genius run differently—had all men of that class been as wise, and prudent, and good, as too many of them have been improvident, foolish, and depraved—had we had a virtuous Burns, a pure Byron, a Goldsmith with common sense, a Coleridge with self-control, and a Poe with sobriety—what a different world it had been; what each of these surpassing spirits might have done to advance, refine, and purify society; what a host of "minor prophets" had been found among the array of the poets of our own country!—For more than the influence of kings, or rulers, or statesmen, or clergymen—though it were multiplied tenfold—is that of the "Makers" whose winged words pass through all lands,

tingle in all ears, touch all hearts, and in all circumstances are remembered and come humming around us—in the hours of labor, in the intervals of business, in trouble, and sorrow, and sickness, and on the bed of death itself; who enjoy, in fact, a kind of omnipresence—whose thoughts have over us the three-fold grasp of beauty, language, and music—and to whom at times “all power is given” in the “dreadful trance” of their genius, to move our beings to their foundations, and to make us better or worse, lower or higher men, according to their pleasure. Yet true it is, and pitiful as true, that these “Makers”—themselves made of the finest clay—have often been “marred,” and that the history of poets is one of the saddest and most humbling in the records of the world—sad and humbling especially, because the poet is ever seen side by side with his own ideal, that graven image of himself he has set up with his own hands, and his failure or fall is judged accordingly. Cowper says in his correspondence, “I have lately finished eight volumes of Johnson’s ‘Lives of the Poets;’ in all that number I observe but one man whose mind seems to have had the slightest tincture of religion, and he was hardly in his senses. His name was Collins. But from the lives of all the rest there is but one inference to be drawn—that poets are a very worthless, wicked set of people.” This is certainly too harsh, since these lives include the names of Addison, Watts, Young, and Milton; but it contains a portion of truth. Poets, as a tribe, have been rather a worthless, wicked set of people; and certainly Edgar A. Poe, instead of being an exception, was probably *the* most worthless and wicked of all his fraternity.

And yet we must say, in justice, that the very greatest poets have been good as well as great. Shakspeare, judging him by his class and age, was undoubtedly, to say the least, a respectable member of society, as well as a warmhearted and generous man. Dante and Milton we need only name. And these are “the first three” in the poetic army. Wordsworth, Young, Cowper, Southey, Bowles, Crabbe, Pollok, are inferior but still great names, and they were all, in different measures, good men. And of late years, indeed, the instances of depraved genius have become rarer and rarer; so much so, that we are disposed to trace a portion of Poe’s renown to

the fact that he stood forth an exception so gross, glaring, and defiant, to what was promising to become a general rule.

In character he was certainly one of the strangest anomalies in the history of mankind. Many men as dissipated as he have had warm hearts, honorable feelings, and have been loved and pitied by all. Many, in every other respect worthless, have had some one or two redeeming points; and the combination of "one virtue and a thousand crimes" has not been uncommon. Others have the excuse of partial derangement for errors otherwise monstrous and unpardonable. But none of these pleas can be made for Poe. He was no more a gentleman than he was a saint. His heart was as rotten as his conduct was infamous. He knew not what the terms honor and honorable meant. He had absolutely no virtue or good quality, unless you call remorse a virtue, and despair a grace. Some have called him mad; but we confess we see no evidence of this in his history. He showed himself, in many instances, a cool, calculating, deliberate blackguard. His intellect was of the clearest, sharpest, and most decisive kind. A large heart has often beat in the bosom of a debauchee; but Poe had not one spark of genuine tenderness, unless it were for his wife, whose heart, nevertheless, and constitution, he broke—hurrying her to a premature grave, that he might write "Annabel Lee" and "The Raven!" His conduct to his patron, and to the lady mentioned in his memoirs, whom he threatened to cover with infamy if she did not lend him money, was purely diabolical. He was, in short, a combination in almost equal proportions, of the fiend, the brute, and the genius. One might call him one of the Gadarene swine, filled with a devil, and hurrying down a steep place to perish in the waves; but none could deny that he was a "swine of genius."

He has been compared to Swift, to Burns, to Sheridan, and to Hazlitt; but in none of these cases does the comparison fully hold. Swift had probably as black crimes on his conscience as Poe; but Swift could feel and could create in others the emotion of warmest friendship, and his outward conduct was irreproachable—it was otherwise with Poe. Burns had many errors, poor fellow! but they were "all of the flesh

none of the spirit ;" he was originally one of the noblest of natures, and during all his career nothing mean, or dishonourable, or black-hearted was ever charged against him ; he was an erring man—but still a *man*. Sheridan was a sad scamp, but had a kind of *bonhomie* about him which carried off in part your feeling of disgust ; and, although false to his party, he was in general true to his friends. Hazlitt's faults were deep and dark ; but he was what Poe was not—an intensely honest man ; and he paid the penalty thereof in unheard-of abuse and proscription. In order to parallel Poe, we must go back to Savage and Dermody. If our readers will turn to the first or second volumes of the "Edinburgh Review," they will find an account of the last-mentioned, which will remind them very much of Poe's dark and discreditable history. Dermody, like Poe, was a habitual drunkard, licentious, false, treacherous, and capable of everything that was mean, base, and malignant ; but, unlike Poe, his genius was not far above mediocrity. Hartley Coleridge, too, may recur to some as a case in point ; but he was a harmless being, and a thorough gentleman—amiable, and, as the phrase goes, "nobody's enemy but his own."

How are we to account for this sad and miserable story ? That Poe's circumstances were precarious from the first—that he was left an orphan—that without his natural protector he became early exposed to temptation—that his life was wandering and unsettled—all this does not explain the utter and reckless abandonment of his conduct, far less his systematic want of truth, and the dark sinistrous malice which rankled in his bosom. Habitual drunkenness does indeed tend to harden the heart ; but, if Poe had possessed any heart originally, it might, as well as in the case of other dissipated men of genius, have resisted, and only in part yielded to the induration ; and why *did* he permit himself to become the abject slave of the vice ? The poet very properly puts "lust hard by hate" (and hence, perhaps, the proverbial fierceness of the bull), and Poe was as licentious as he was intemperate ; but the question recurs, Why ? We are driven to one of two suppositions : either that his moral nature was more than usually depraved *ab origine*—that, as some have maintained, "conscience was omitted" in his constitution ; or that, by the unrestrained in-

dulgence of his passions, he, as John Bunyan has it, "tempted the devil," and became the bound victim of infernal influence. In this age of scepticism such a theory is sure to be laughed at, but is not the less likely to be true. If ever man in modern times resembled at least a demoniac, "exceeding fierce, and dwelling among tombs"—possessed now by a spirit of fury, and now by a spirit of falsehood, and now by an "unclean spirit"—it was Poe, as he rushed with his eyes open into every excess of riot; or entered the house of his intended bride on the night before the anticipated marriage, and committed such outrages as to necessitate a summons of the police to remove the drunk and raving demon; or ran howling through the midnight like an evil spirit on his way to the Red Sea, battered by the rains, beaten by the winds, waving aloft his arms in frenzy, cursing loud and deep man, himself, God, and proclaiming that he was already damned, and damned for ever. In demoniac possession, too, of a different kind, it was that he fancied the entire secret of the making of the universe to be revealed to him, and went about everywhere shouting, "Eureka"—a title, too, which he gave to the strange and splendid lecture in which he recorded the memorable illusion. And when the spirit of talk came at times mightily upon him—when the "witch element" seemed to surround him—when his brow flushed like an evening cloud—when his eyes glared wild lightning—when his hair stood up like the locks of a Bacchante—when his chest heaved, and his voice rolled and swelled like subterranean thunder—men, admiring, fearing, and wondering, said, "He hath a demon, yea, seven devils are entered into him." His tongue was then "set on fire," but set on fire of hell; and its terrific inspiration rayed out of every gesture and look, and spake in every tone.

"Madness!" it will be cried again; but that word does not fully express the nature of Poe's excitement in these fearful hours. There was no incoherence either in his matter or in his words. There was, amid all the eloquence and poetry of his talk, a vein of piercing, searching, logical, but sinister thought. All his faculties were shown in the same lurid light, and touched by the same torch of the Furies. All blazed emulous of each other's fire. The awful Soul which had entered his soul formed an exact counterpart to it, and the haggard "dream was

one." One is reminded of the words of Aird, in his immortal poem, "The Demoniac :"—

" Perhaps by hopeless passions bound,  
And render'd weak, the mastery a demon o'er him found :  
Reason and duty all, all life, his being all became  
Subservient to the wild, strange law that overbears his frame ;  
And in the dead hours of the night, when happier children lie  
In slumbers seal'd, he journeys far the flowing rivers by.  
And oft he haunts the sepulchres, where the thin shoals of ghosts  
Flit shiv'ring from death's chilling dews ; to their unbodied hosts  
That charm through night their feeble plaint, he yells ; at the red morn  
Meets the great armies of the winds, high o'er the mountains borne,  
Leaping against their viewless rage, *tossing his arms on high,*  
And hanging balanced o'er sheer steeps against the morning sky."

We are tempted to add the following lines, partly for their Dantesque power, and partly because they describe still more energetically than the last quotation such a tremendous possession as was Herman's in fiction, and Poe's in reality :—

" He rose ; a smother'd gleam  
Was on his brow ; with fierce motes roll'd his eye's distemper'd beam ;  
He smiled, 'twas as the lightning of a hope about to die  
*For ever from the furrow'd brows of hell's eternity ;*  
Like sun-warm'd snakes, *rose on his head a storm of golden hair,*  
Tangled ; and thus on Miriam fell hot breathings of despair :  
' Perish the breasts that gave me milk ! yea, in thy mouldering heart :  
Good thrifty roots I'll plant, to stay next time my hunger's smart.  
Red-vein'd derived apples I shall eat with savage haste,  
And see thy life-blood blushing through, and glory in the taste.' "

Herman, in the poem, has a demon sent into his heart, in divine sovereignty, and that he may be cured by the power of Christ. But Poe had Satan substituted for soul, apparently to torment him before the time ; and we do not see him ere the end sitting, "clothed, and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus." He died, as he had lived, a raving, cursing, self-condemned, conscious cross between the fiend and the genius, believing nothing, hoping nothing, loving nothing, fearing nothing—himself his own god and his own devil—a solitary wretch, who had cut off every bridge that connected him with the earth around and the heavens above. This, however, let us say in his favor—he has died "alone in his iniquity ;" he has never, save by his example (so far as we know his works), sought to shake faith or sap morality. His writings may be

morbid, but they are pure; and, if his life was bad has he not left it as a legacy to moral anatomists, who have met and wondered over it, although they have given up all attempt at dissection or diagnosis, shaking the head, and leaving him alone in its shroud, with the solemn whispered warning to the world, and especially to its stronger and brighter spirits, "Beware!"

A case so strange as Poe's compels us into new and more searching forms of critical, as well as of moral analysis. Genius has very generally been ascribed to him; but some will resist and deny the ascription—proceeding partly upon peculiar notions of what genius is, and partly from a very natural reluctance to concede to a wretch so vile a gift so noble, and in a degree, too, so unusually large. Genius has often been defined as something inseparably connected with the *genial* nature. If this definition be correct, Poe was not a genius any more than Swift, for geniality neither he nor his writings possessed. But if genius mean a compound of imagination and inventiveness, original thought heated by passion and accompanied by power of fancy, Poe was a man of great genius. In wanting geniality, however, he wanted all that makes genius lovely and beloved, at once beautiful and dear. A man of genius, without geniality, is a mountain clad in snow, companioned by tempests, and visited only by hardy explorers who love sublime nakedness, and to snatch a fearful joy from gazing down black precipices; a man whose genius is steeped in the genial nature, is an autumn landscape, suggesting not only images of beauty, and giving thrills of delight, but yielding peaceful and plentiful fruits, and in which the heart finds a rest and a home. From the one the timid, the weak, and the gentle retire in a terror which overpowers their admiration; but in the other the lowest and feeblest find shelter and repose. Even Dante and Milton, owing to the excess of their intellectual and imaginative powers over their genial feelings, are less loved than admired; while the vast supremacy of Shakspeare is due, not merely to his universal genius, but to the predominance of geniality and heart in all his writings. Many envy and even hate Dante and Milton; and had Shakspeare only written his loftier tragedies, many might have hated and envied him too; but who can entertain any such feelings for the author of the "Comedy of Errors" and "Twelfth Night," the creator of Fal-



staff, Dogberry, and Verres? If genius be the sun geniality is the atmosphere through which alone his beams can penetrate with power, or be seen with pleasure.

Poe is distinguished by many styles and many manners. He is the author of fictions as matter-of-fact in their construction and language as the stories of Defoe, and of tales as weird and wonderful as those of Hoffman; of amatory strains trembling, if not with heart, with passion, and suffused with the purple glow of love, and of poems, dirges either in form or in spirit, into which the genius of desolation has shed its dreariest essence; of verses, gay with apparent, but shallow joy, and of others dark with a misery which reminds us of the helpless, hopeless, infinite misery, which sometimes visits the souls in dreams. But, amid all this diversity of tone and of subject, the leading qualities of his mind are obvious. These consist of strong imagination—an imagination, however, more fertile in incidents, forms, and characters, than in images; keen power of analysis, rather than synthetic genius; immense inventiveness; hot passions, cooled down by the presence of art, till they resemble sculptured flame, or “lightning in the hand of a painted Jupiter;” knowledge rather *recherché* and varied, than strict, accurate, or profound; and an unlimited command of words, phrases, musical combinations of sound, and all the other materials of an intellectual workman. The direction of these powers was controlled principally by his habits and circumstances. These made him morbid; and his writings have all a certain morbidity about them. You say at once, cool and clear as most of them are, these are not the productions of a healthy or happy man. But surely never was there such a calm despair—such a fiery torment so eased in ice! When you compare the writings with the known facts of the author’s history, they appear to be so like, and so unlike, his character. You seem looking at an inverted image. You have the features, but they are discovered at an unexpected angle. You see traces of the misery of a confirmed debauchee, but none of his disconnected ravings, or of the partial imbecility which often falls upon his powers. There is a strict, almost logical, method, in his wildest productions. He tells us himself that he wrote “The Raven” as coolly as if he had been working out a mathematical problem. His frenzy, if that name must

be given to the strange fire which was in him, is a conscious one; he feels his own pulse when it is at the wildest, and looks at his foaming lips in the looking-glass.

Poe was led by a singular attraction to all dark, dreadful, and disgusting objects and thoughts: maelstroms, mysteries, murders, mummies, premature burials, excursions to the moon, solitary mansions surrounded by mist and weighed down by mysterious dooms, lonely tarns, trembling to the winds of autumn, and begirt by the shivering ghosts of woods—these are the materials which his wild imagination loves to work with, and out of them to weave the most fantastic and dismal of worlds. Yet there's "magic in the web." You often revolt at his subjects; but no sooner does he enter on them, than your attention is riveted, you lend him your ears—nay, that is a feeble word, you surrender your whole being to him for a season, although it be as you succumb, body and soul, to the dominion of a nightmare. What greatly increases effect, as in "Gulliver's Travels," is the circumstantiality with which he recounts the most amazing and incredible things. His tales, too, are generally cast into the autobiographical form, which adds much to their living vraisemblance and vivid power. It is Coleridge's "Old Mariner" over again. Strange, wild, terrible, is the tale he has to tell; haggard, wo-begone, unearthly is the appearance of the narrator. Every one at first, like the wedding guest, is disposed to shrink and beat his breast; but he holds you with his glittering eye, he forces you to follow him into his own enchanted region, and once there, you forget everything, your home, your friends, your creed, your very personal identity, and become swallowed up like a straw in the maelstrom of his story, and forget to breathe till it is ended, and the mysterious tale-teller is gone. And during all the wild and whirling narrative, the same chilly glitter has continued to shine in his eye, his blood has never warmed, and he has never exalted his voice above a thrilling whisper.

Poe's power may perhaps be said to be divisible into two parts: first, that of adding an air of circumstantial verity to incredibilities; and, secondly, that of throwing a wierd lustre upon commonplace events. He tells fiction so minutely, and with such apparent simplicity and sincerity, that you almost believe it true; and he so combines and so recounts such inci-

dents as you meet with every day in the newspapers, that you feel truth to be stranger far than fiction. Look, as a specimen of the first, to his "Descent into the Maelstrom," and to his "Hans Pfaal's Journey to the Moon." Both are impossible—the former as much so as the latter—but he tells them with such Dante-like directness, and such Defoe-like minuteness, holding his watch, and marking, as it were, every second in the progress of each stupendous lie, that you rub your eyes at the close, and ask the question, Might not all this actually have occurred? And then turn to the "Murders in the Rue St. Morgue," or to the "Mystery of Marie Roget," and see how, by the disposition of the drapery he throws over little or ordinary incidents, connected, indeed, with an extraordinary catastrophe, he lends

"The light which never was on sea or shore"

to streets of revelry and vulgar sin, and to streams whose sluggish waters are never disturbed save by the plash of murdered victims, or by the plunge of suicides desperately hurling their bodies to the fishes, and their souls to the flames.

In one point, Poe bears a striking resemblance to his own illustrious countryman, Brockden Brown—neither resort to agency absolutely supernatural, in order to produce their terrific effects. They despise to start a ghost from the grave—they look upon this as a cheap and *fade* expedient—they appeal to the "mightier might" of the human passions, or to those strange unsolved phenomena in the human mind, which the terms mesmerism and somnambulism serve rather to disguise than to discover, and sweat out from their native soil superstitions far more powerful than those of the past. Once only does Poe approach the brink of the purely preternatural—it is in that dreary tale, the "Fall of the House of Usher;" and yet nothing so discovers the mastery of the writer as the manner in which he avoids, while nearing, the gulf. There is really nothing, after all, in the strange incidents of that story but what natural principles can explain. But Poe so arranges and adjusts the singular circumstances to each other, and weaves around them such an artful mist, that they produce a most unearthly effect. Perhaps some may think that he has fairly crossed the line in that dialogue between Charmian and

Iras, describing the conflagration of the world. But, even there, how admirably does he produce a certain feeling of probability by the management of the natural causes which he brings in to produce the catastrophe. He burns his old witch-mother, the earth, scientifically! We must add that the above is the only respect in which Poe resembles Brown. Brown was a virtuous and amiable man, and his works, although darkened by unsettled religious views, breathe a fine spirit of humanity. Poe wonders at, and hates man; Brown wonders at, but at the same time pities, loves, and hopes in him. Brown mingled among men like a bewildered angel; Poe like a prying fiend.

We have already alluded to the singular power of analysis possessed by this strange being. This is chiefly conspicuous in those tales of his which turn upon circumstantial evidence. No lawyer or judge has ever equalled Poe in the power he manifests of sifting evidence—of balancing probabilities—of finding the *multum* of a large legal case in the *parvum* of some minute and well-nigh invisible point—and in constructing the real story out of a hundred dubious and conflicting incidents. What scales he carries with him! how fine and tremulous with essential justice! And with what a microscopic eye he watches every footprint! Letters thrown loose on the mantel-piece, bell-ropes, branches of trees, handkerchiefs, &c., become to him instinct with meaning, and point with silent finger to crime and to punishment. And to think of this subtle algebraic power, combined with such a strong ideality, and with such an utterly corrupted moral nature! Surely none of the hybrids which geology has dug out of the graves of chaos and exhibited to our shuddering view is half so strange a compound as was Edgar A. Poe. We have hitherto scarcely glanced at his poetry. It, although lying in a very short compass, is of various merit: it is an abridgment of the man in his strength and weakness. Its chief distinction, as a whole, from his prose, is its peculiar music. That, like all his powers, is fitful, changeful, varying; but not more so than to show the ever-varying moods of his mind, acting on a peculiar and indefinite theory of sound. The alpha and omega of that theory may be condensed in the word "reiteration." He knows the effect which can be produced by ringing changes

on particular words. The strength of all his strains consequently lies in their chorus, or "oure turn," as we call it in Scotland. We do not think that he could have succeeded in sustaining the harmonies or keeping up the interest of a large poem. But his short flights are exceedingly beautiful, and some of his poems are miracles of melody. All our readers are familiar with "The Raven." It is a dark world in itself; it rises in your sky suddenly as the cloud like a man's hand rose in the heaven of Palestine, and covers all the horizon with the blackness of darkness. As usual in his writings, it is but a common event idealised; there is nothing supernatural or even extraordinary in the incident recounted;—but the reiteration of the one dreary word "nevermore;" the effect produced by seating the solemn bird of yore upon the bust of Pallas; the manner in which the fowl with its fiery eyes becomes the evil conscience or memory of the lonely widower; and the management of the time, the season, and the circumstances—all unite in making the Raven in its flesh and blood a far more terrific apparition than ever from the shades made night hideous, while "revisiting the glimpses of the moon." The poem belongs to a singular class of poetic uniques, each of which is itself enough to make a reputation, such as Coleridge's "Rime of the Anciente Marinere," or "Christabel," and Aird's "Devil's Dream upon Mount Acksbeck"—poems in which some one new and generally dark idea is wrought out into a whole so strikingly complete and self-contained as to resemble creation, and in which thought, imagery, language, and music combine to produce a similar effect, and are made to chime together like bells. What entireness of effect, for instance, is produced in the "Devil's Dream," by the unearthly theme, the strange title, the austere and terrible figures, the singular verse, and the knotty and contorted language; and in the "Rime of the Anciente Marinere," by the ghastly form of the narrator—the wild rythm, the new mythology, and the exotic diction of the tale he tells! So Poe's "Raven" has the unity of a tree blasted, trunk, and twigs, and root, by a flash of lightning. Never did melancholy more thoroughly "mark for its own" any poem than this. All is in intense keeping. Short as the poem is, it has a beginning, middle, and end. Its commencement how abrupt and striking—the

time a December midnight—the poet a solitary man, sitting, “weak and weary,” poring in helpless fixity, but with no profit or pleasure, over a black-letter volume; the fire half expired, and the dying embers haunted by their own ghosts, and shivering above the hearth! The middle is attained when the raven mounts the bust of Pallas, and is fascinating the solitary wretch by his black, glittering plumage, and his measured, melancholy croak. And the end closes as with the wings of night over the sorrow of the unfortunate, and these dark words conclude the tale:—

“And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor,  
Shall be lifted Nevermore.”

You feel as if the poem might have been penned by the finger of one of the damned.

The same shadow of unutterable wo rests upon several of his smaller poems, and the effect is greatly enhanced by their gay and song-like rhythm. That madness or misery which *sings* out its terror or grief, is always the most desperate. It is like a burden of hell set to an air of heaven. “Ulalume” might have been written by Coleridge during the sad middle portion of his life. There is a sense of dreariness and desolation as of the last of earth’s autumns, which we find nowhere else in such perfection. What a picture these words convey to the imagination:—

“The skies they were ashen and sober;  
The leaves they were crisped and sere—  
The leaves they were withering and sere,  
It was night in the lonesome October  
Of my most immemorial year.  
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,  
In the misty mid-region of Weir—  
It was down by the dark tarn of Auber,  
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.”

These to many will appear only words; but what wondrous words. What a spell they wield! Like a wasted haggard face, they have no bloom or beauty; but what a tale they tell! Weir—Auber—where are they? They exist not, except in the writer’s imagination, and in yours, for the instant they are uttered, a misty picture, with a tarn, dark as a murderer’s

eye, below, and the last thin, yellow leaves of October fluttering above—exponents both of a misery which scorns the name of sorrow, and knows neither limit nor termination—is hung up in the chamber of your soul for ever. What power, too, there is in the “*Haunted Palace*,” particularly in the last words, “*They laugh, but smile no more!*” Dante has nothing superior in all those chilly yet fervent words of his, where “*the ground burns froze, and cold performs the effect of fire.*”

We must now close our sketch of Poe; and we do so with feelings of wonder, pity, and awful sorrow, tempted to look up to heaven, and to cry, “*Lord, why didst thou make this man in vain?*” Yet perhaps there was even in him some latent spark of goodness, which may even now be developing itself under a kindlier sky. He has gone far away from the misty mid-region of Weir; his dreams of cosmogonies have been tested by the searching light of Eternity’s truth; his errors have received the reward that was meet; and we cannot but say, ere we close, Peace even to the well-nigh putrid dust of Edgar A. Poe.

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## NO. VI.—SIR EDWARD LYTTON BULWER.\*

THE attention of the Scottish public has of late been strongly attracted to Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, through his visit to Edinburgh; and the elegant and scholarly addresses he delivered there. We propose taking the opportunity so lawfully and gracefully furnished by his recent appearances among us, to analyse again at some length, and in a critical yet kindly spirit, the leading elements of his literary character and genius.

Bulwer has been now twenty-seven years before the public, and has, during that period, filled almost every phase of authorship and of thought. He has been a critic, an editor a

\* The Novels and Romances of Sir E. B. Lytton, Bart.

dramatist, a historian, a politician, a speculator in metaphysics, a poet, a novelist, the editor of a magazine, a member of Parliament, a subject of the cold-water cure, a philosophical Radical, and a moderate Conservative. In his youth, he worshipped Hazlitt and Shelley; in his middle age, he vibrated between Brougham and Coleridge; and, of late, he associates with Alison and Aytoun! He has poured out books in all manners, on all subjects, and in all styles; and his profusion might have seemed that of a spendthrift, if it had not been for the stores in the distance which even his scatterings by the wayside revealed. For versatility of genius, variety of intellectual experience, and the brilliant popularity which has followed him in all his diversified career, he reminds us rather of Goethe or Voltaire than of any living author. Like them he has worshipped the god Proteus, and so devoutly and diversely worshipped him, that he might almost, at times, be confounded with the object of his adoration.

We think decidedly, however, that this boundless fertility and elasticity have tended to lessen the general idea of Bulwer's powers, and to cast an air of tentative experiment and rash adventure over many of his works. Had he concentrated himself upon some grand topic, his fame had now been equally wide, not less brilliant, and much more solid than it is. Had he taken some one lofty Acropolis by storm, and shown the flag of his genius floating on its summit, instead of investing a hundred at once, he had been, and been counted, a greater general. We would willingly have accepted two or three superb novels, one large conclusive history, along with a single work of systematic and profound criticism, in exchange for all that motley and unequal, although most varied and imposing mass of fiction, history, plays, poems, and politics, which forms the collected works of Sir E. Lytton Bulwer.

Some of Sir Edward's admirers have ventured to compare him to Shakspeare and to Scott. Such comparisons are not just. Than Shakspeare he owes a great deal less to nature, and a great deal more to culture, as well as to that indomitable perseverance to which he has lately ascribed so much of his success, so that we may indeed call the one the least, and the other the most cultivated of great authors; and to Scott he is vastly inferior in that simple power, directness of aim,



natural dignity, manly spirit, fire, and health, which rank him immediately below Homer. We may here remark that, notwithstanding all that has been said and sung about the genius of Scott, we are convinced that justice has never been done to one feature of his novels—we mean their excellence as specimens of English style. Except in Burke and De Quincey, whose mode of thinking is so very different, we know of no passages in English prose which approach the better parts of the Waverley series in the union of elegance and strength, in manly force, natural grace, and noble rhythmical cadence. Would that any word of ours could recall the numerous admirers of the morbid magnificence and barbarous dissonance of Carlyle's style; of the curt affected jargon which mars the poetic beauty of Emerson's; of the loose fantastic verbiage in which Dickens chooses to indite most of his serious passages; and of the labored antithesis, uneasy brilliance, and assumed carelessness of Macaulay; and induce them to take up again the neglected pages of Burke, with all the wondrous treasures of wisdom, knowledge, imagery, and language they contain, and to read night and day Scott's novels—not for their story, or their pictures of national manners, but for the sake of their wells of English undefiled; the specimens of picturesque, simple, rich, and powerful writing which they so abundantly contain.

Bulwer, too, although even in his most favored hours he cannot write like Scott, is distinguished by the merit of his style. It has more point, if not so much simplicity; if possessing less strength, it has far more brilliance; and it has, moreover, a certain classical charm—a certain Attic elegance—a certain tinge of the antique—which few writers of the age can rival. If Disraeli's mode of writing remind you of the gorgeous dress of Jewish females, with their tiaras shining on the brow, their diamond necklaces gleaming above the breast, the vivid yellow or deep red of their garments, their brodered hair, and pearls, and costly array, Bulwer's, in his happier vein, reminds you of the attire of the Grecian women, shod with sandals, clothed with the simple yet elegant tunic, and bearing each on her head a light and tremulous urn.

Passing from his style, we have some remarks to make on the following points connected with him—the alleged non-

poetical nature of his mind, his originality, the impersonal faculty he possesses to such a degree, his remarkable width of mind, his dramatic power, the fact that with all his frequent flippancy, levity, and excess of point, he is equal to all the great crises of his narrative; and finally, to that power or principle of *growth* which has been so conspicuous in his literary history.

First, not a few have maintained that Bulwer, with all his brilliant effect and eloquence, is not, properly speaking, a poet. An eloquent detractor of his has said:—"The author is an orator, and has tried to be a poet. Dickens's John the Carrier was perpetually on the verge of a joke, but never made one: Bulwer's relation to poetry is of the same provoking kind. The lips twitch, the face glows, the eyes light; but the joke is not there. An exquisite *savoir faire* has led him within sight of the intuitions of poetic instinct. Laborious calculation has almost stood for sight, but his maps and charts are not the earth and the heavens. His vision is not a dream, but a nightmare; you have Parnassus before you, but the light that never was on sea or shore is wanting. The whole reminds you of a lunar landscape, rocks and caves to spare, but *no atmosphere*. It is fairy-land travelled by dark. How you sigh even for the chaos, the *discordia semina* of genius, while toiling through the impotent waste of this sterile maturity."

This is vivid and vigorous, but hardly just. We need meet it only by pronouncing one magic word—"Zanoni." Who that ever read that glorious romance, with its pictures of love, and life, and death, and the mysteries of the unseen world; the fine dance of the human and the preternatural elements which are in it, and keep time so admirably to the music of the genius which has created both, and the melting sublimity of its close—will deny the author the name of poet? Or who that has ever read those allegories and little tales which are sprinkled through "The Student," and the "Pilgrims of the Rhine," can fail to see in them the creative element? Or, take the end of his Harold, the death of Rienzi, the *Hell* scene in "Night and Morning," and the closing chapters of the "Last Days of Pompeii"—the terms "oratory" or "art" will not measure these: they are instinct with power; their words

are the mighty rushing wings of a supernal tempest ; and to us, at least, they always, even at the twentieth perusal, give that deep delightful shiver, that thrill of awful joy, which proclaims that the Spirit of Genius is passing by, and is making every hair on our flesh start up to do him obeisance.

True genius is, and must be, original ; so that the terms "original genius" are a poor pleonasm. Now, we think that Bulwer can be proved to have originality ; and originality in any department of the fine arts is genius. His thought, his imagery, his style, his form of fiction, are all intensely his own ; and, *therefore*, since exerted on ideal subjects, all are those of a poet. He began his career indeed, as most writers do, with imitation. He found certain models in vogue at the time, besides some which, although not generally popular, were recommended to him by his own taste. Hence, in his early novels, he has now Godwin, now Scott, and now the authors of what were then called the fashionable novels, such as Tremaine and Almacks, in his eye. But he soon soared out of these trammels, and exhibited and began to realise his own ideal of fiction, the peculiarity of which perhaps lies in the extreme *breadth* of the purpose he seeks through the novel and romance to fulfil. He has tried to make it a cosmopolitan thing—a mirror—not of low or high life exclusively, not of the everyday or the ideal alone, not of the past, or present, or future, merely ; but of each and all ;—each set in its proper proportions, and all shown in a brilliant light. Ward, and the whole of that school, including Disraeli in his "Vivian Grey" and "Young Duke," wrote for the fashionable classes. Godwin wrote for political and moral philosophers. Dickens writes for Londoners, Lever for Irishmen, and Thackeray for the microscopic students of human nature everywhere. Even Scott neither expressed the spirit of his own age, nor ever attempted to reproduce the classical periods ; nor has he discovered any sympathy with the mighty metaphysical, moral, and religious problems with which all thinkers are now compelled to grapple. But Bulwer has written *of* the world, and *for* the world, in the broadest sense ; has described society, from the glittering crown of its head, to the servile sole of its foot ; has painted all kinds of life, the high, the middle, the mean, the town and the country, the convulsive and the calm

—that of noblemen, of gamesters, of students, of highwaymen, of murderers, and of milliners; has mated with the men and manners of all ages; has reproduced, with startling vraisemblance, the ancient Roman times, and breathed life into the gigantic skeletons of Herculaneum and Pompeii; has coped with many of the social and moral questions, as well as faithfully reflected the salient features of our own wondrous mother-age; and has with bold foot invaded those regions of speculation which blend with the shadows and splendors of the life to come. It is this wide and catholic character which makes his writings so popular on the Continent. We do not, indeed, say that he has completely filled up the broad outline of his purpose; otherwise he had been the greatest novelist, perhaps also the greatest writer, in the world. But he has succeeded so far as to induce us to class him with the first authors of his time. He *has*, although with much effort, long training, and over consciousness both of the toil and the triumph, fairly lifted himself above this “ignorant present time,” and caught on his wings the wide calm light of the universe. Yet, with all this Goethe-like breadth, he has none of his icy indifference; but is one of the most fervid and glowing, as well as clear and cosmopolitan, of modern writers.

His depth has often been denied, nor are we careful to maintain it. There are in some of our authors certain quiet subtle touches, certain profound “asides,” certain piercing single thoughts, which proclaim a native vein, communicating directly with the great Heart of Being; but which we seldom if ever, find in Bulwer. Although he be, in our judgment, a true poet, he is not a poet of the very highest order. But, perhaps, his exceeding width may be taken as in some measure a compensation for his deficiency in depth. Indeed, some may even contend that if there be the same *amount of mind*, it is of little consequence whether it be diffused over a hundred intellectual regions, or gathered together in one or two profound pits; that as depth and height are only relative terms, so it is with width and depth; and that as you call the sky indifferently either lofty or profound, so a very wide man is deep in one way and direction, and a very deep man is wide in another. Be this as it may, and there seems a proportion of truth as well as of fallacy in it, we contend that

the writer who, like Bulwer, has traversed such varied regions, found and filled, or made and inspired, so many characters, imbibed the spirit, talked the language, and reproduced the soul of so many times, must be a great man, whether we call him or not a GREAT poet.

One element of poetic power he unquestionably has : he is impersonal ; and, on the whole, very little of an egotist. In "Pelham," indeed, and one or two more of his earlier novels, while he was yet trifling with his pen, and had not taken any full or calm aim at his object, he seemed often to be glancing obliquely at his own image in the mirror of self-conceit, partly from a wish to re-assure his confidence in himself, and partly from that spirit of indolent vacancy which often falls upon a writer who is only half-hearted in his task, and who must stir himself to renewed action by the spur of vanity. But latterly, he has risen to a higher region, and has contrived, while "shooting his soul" into a thousand personages, fictitious or real, high and low, wicked and good, commonplace and romantic, to forget his own elegant and *rècherché* person—his own fastidious habits and tastes, his own aristocratic birth and training, and to remember nothing save the subject or idea which has entered, filled, and transfigured him. For example, Eugene Aram, though a monster, is not a mere distorted shadow of the author ; Rienzi is not Bulwer, nor is Walter Montreuil, nor is Harold the last of the Saxon kings, nor is Warwick the King-maker. These, and many of his other heroes, are not projections of the writer's image ; but are either bold individual creations, or sternly true to the truth of history. Wordsworth has accused even Goethe of multiplying his own image under the Protean disguises ; and of being an egotist under the semblance of an absolute and colorless catholicity ; and on this account most justly ranks him beneath Shakspeare, who can become, and is delighted to become, everybody except himself. Bulwer, on the contrary, has often approached the Shakspearian method, with this difference, that while the novelist passes from soul to soul with labor dire and weary, and like the magician in the story of Fadlallah, has to die in agony out of his own idiosyncrasy, ere he is born in joy and exultation into that of others, Shakspeare melts into the being of all other men as softly as snow into a river, and as

easily as one dream slides within and becomes a part and portion in another or another series of dreams. But the power in the novelist, as well as in the world-poet, is magical, and of itself suffices to prove him a writer of genius.

His dramatic quality is in fact only a form or *alias* of his great width and the impersonal habit of his mind, and need not be dilated on. We prefer to say something about the power he has of rising to the level of most of the great critical points in the stories which he narrates. It is, we grant again, often by effort, by a sweat like that of Sisyphus, that he gets his big stone to the top of the hill, but once there, it remains a triumphal mark—a far-seen trophy of perseverance and power. We grant him, in his general style, too uniformly lively and brilliant. He is like those writers of whose works it has been said, "the whole is not always a poem, while every sentence is poetry." But, first, this is complimentary to his powers, few are so Australian in their intellectual wealth; and, were, secondly, the charge pressed, Bulwer might reply as a student is once said to have done:—"Your papers are all equally excellent," said his professor. "Then," replied he, "I'll take care that in my next some parts shall be *divine*." And thus sometimes our author does answer in this matter. He approaches great and noble topics, each one, like the brethren of Jerubbaal, "resembling the son of a king;" he girds up his loins to mate with their majesty; he effects his purpose; and what Hazlitt says of Milton becomes *nearly* true of him—"he is always striving to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them." Effort, when united with weakness, and ending in the fate of the frog in the fable, is a pitiable spectacle; but not so that effort which is prompted by manly ambition, which is sustained by genuine and growing strength, and which, when it has gained the success it deserves, appears only less wonderful and less sublime than that perfect ease of nature with which another very rare class of writers work their still mightier works. We have specified already a few of those superb passages by which Bulwer has made out his claim to be the Milton, while Scott is the Shakespeare, of novelists. Even Scott has seldom surpassed the death of Walter Montreal, or the picture of Vesuvius drunk with devouring fire, and staggering in his terrible vomit.

What is genius? is a question to which many answers have been returned. It is, says De Quincey, "mind steeped and saturated in the genial nature." It is, say others, "impassioned truth—thought become phosphorescent!" It is, say others, "original imagination united with constructive power." Without discussing these definitions, or propounding another, we shall state one element which is essential to genius—*Genius is Growth*. A man of genius is always a man of limitless growth, with a soul smitten with a passion for growth, and open to every influence which promotes it—one who grows always like a tree, by day and by night, in calm and in storm, through opposition and through applause, in difficulty and in despair—nay, on the chill death-bed itself his soul continues to grow, and never more rapidly than there, when he sometimes says, with the dying Schiller, "many things are becoming plain and clear to me." It is this which, perhaps, proves best his greatness and his relation to the Infinite. The man of talent grows to a certain point, and there stops; Genius knows of no stops, and no periods. Even the wings of eagles, "knitting," though they do, the mountain with the sky have their severe limit fixed in the far ether; but the wings of angels have none. Emerson speaks of nature as saying, in answer to all doubts and difficulties, "I grow, I grow." So there hums through the being of a true poet the low everlasting melody (truer than that fabled of nature, since the growth of matter is only temporary, while that of mind is eternal), "I also grow, and shall grow for ever." This growth may sometimes seem to retrograde, just as there are, it is said, certain plants which grow downwards, but downwards in *search of light*; and so the poet-soul, when it stoops, is only stooping to see, and when it turns, is only turning to conquer. This growth may sometimes be lost sight of amid the darkness of neglect, or covered up in the night of calamity, or buried in foliage produced by its own vigor; but, even as fairies were said to hear the flowers growing, there *are* ears of fairy fineness, which never cease to be aware of the musical growth of men of the true and sovereign seed, springing up like flowers to everlasting life—arising in harmony and in incense toward the heavens of God.

Yes! For this growth is often, if not always, holy and ce-

lestial, as well as poetical and harmonious. The man who really grows, grows in wisdom, love, and purity, as well as in genius and artistic excellence. It is as a whole that he grows, it is in God and toward God that his being develops itself. Not a few gifted persons, indeed, have been arrested in their career by early death or by dissipation, and appear now in stunted or blasted forms along the horizon of history. But it is a remarkable fact, that most men of genius who have been permitted to outlive the dangerous period of the passions, and to attain the majestic noon of middle life, or the still evening of old age, have become either pious, or at least moral, good-tempered, and exemplary men. We need only name Young, Johnson, Southey, Coleridge, Goethe, even Moore in some measure, Shelley, and, so far as we can ascertain, Shakespeare himself, in proof of this. Time, which so often freezes and contracts men of more prosaic mould into a shrivelled selfishness, which seems chillier than death itself, in the case of those whose minds had originally burned like a furnace seven times heated, only modifies the flame, mingles with it the salt of common sense, if not the frankincense of piety, and renders it more kindly in its outgoings to men, if it does not turn it upward in tongues of sacrifice and worship to the great Fountain of Light and Father of Spirits. And when piety mingles with the maturity of genius in any gifted soul, it becomes a sight more beautiful than any that this fair creation can show us. The man, then, instead of standing with the mere moralist, and the mere cold speculator, on the outside of things, becomes a "partaker of the divine nature;" does not with others discern with lack-lustre eye merely the fiery fences and outward semblances of the Infinite, but sees, and swims, and grows in that holy and boundless element itself.

That Bulwer has as yet attained the consummation so devoutly to be wished, which our last sentence describes, we dare not affirm. But certainly he has grown, and his growth has been of a total and vital sort. His first two or three works were distinguished chiefly by sentimentalism and cleverness—a sentimentalism scarcely amounting to genius, and a cleverness hardly attaining to wit. In "Eugene Aram" he displayed a morbid and melodramatic earnestness, strongly characteristic of that uneasy and thick-sighted mood of mind,



which was his at the time, and which he was increasing by the study of the "French School of Desperation." In the "Last Days of Pompeii" and "Rienzi," you saw him throwing out his mind upon subjects which carried him as far as possible away from his own unsatisfied reason, torturing doubts, and agitating passions. Then, in "Zanoni," the strong spirit was heard beating against the bars of its misery—and its life; and asking in its despair questions at Destiny and the world unseen. Then, in his "Ernest Maltravers," his "Alice," and his "New Timon," he seemed backing out of spiritual speculations into a certain sneering voluptuousness worthy of Wieland, of Byron, or of Voltaire. And lastly, in his "Caxtons" and "My Novel," there seems to have risen on his path what the Germans call an "aftershire" of Christianity—a mild, belated, but divine-seeming day, in which he is walking on still, and which he doubtless deeply regrets had not sooner gleamed over his chequered way. His allusions to the experiences of Robert Hall, and to the benignant influence of the Christian faith in soothing the woes of humanity, which abound in the "Caxtons" especially, are exceedingly beautiful, and have opened to Bulwer's genius the doors of many a heart that were obstinately shut against him before. The moral tone of these latter novels, too, is much sweeter, healthier, and purer than that of his earlier tales. Their artistic execution is not only equal, but we think in many respects superior. If there is in them less artifice, there is more real art; and if they have less of the glare and bustle of rhetoric, they have more of the soul of poetry. If they dazzle and astonish less, they are infinitely more pleasing, and if they abound not so much in rapid adventures, thrilling situations, and romantic interest, they idealise common life, and show the element of poetic interest as well as the soul of goodness which are found amongst the middle classes of society. One character in his last novel is perhaps the finest of all his creations—we mean, of course, Burley. In the very daring implied in taking up the *name* of the most original character Scott ever drew, old John Balfour, the stern homicide of Magnus Muir, and connecting it with the most novel and striking character Bulwer ever depicted, there was genius. Who would venture even to *call* the hero of a new play Macbeth, or Lear, or Hamlet? Unless

the play were of transcendent merit, the very name so presumptuously assumed would condemn it as assuredly as John Galt's "Lady Macbeth" was condemned. But, in spite of this preliminary prejudice, Bulwer's Burley is not only as entirely different from Scott's, as a rough literary man of the nineteenth century must be from a rough soldier of the seventeenth; but as a picture of a strange, wild, half-mad man of genius, full, nevertheless, of the milk of human kindness, and of the warmest and noblest feelings, it is almost perfect, and of itself sufficient to immortalise the author.

In contemplating Bulwer's career, we are impressed, in fine, with one or two reflections of a somewhat interesting and important kind. It teaches us the might and worth which lie in determined struggle and invincible perseverance. We do not, by any means, dislike those splendid *coup de mains* of literary triumph we find in such cases as Byron, Macaulay, Charles Dickens, and Alexander Smith, all of whom "arose one morning and found themselves famous." Nay, we glory in them, as proofs of the power of the human mind, and as auguries of the more illustrious successes reserved for yet brighter and purer spirits in the future. They show what man can do, and hint what man yet *may* do. But we love still better to see a strong spirit slowly urging his way against opposition, often driven back but never discouraged, often perplexed but never in despair, often cast down but never destroyed, often falling but never fallen, and at last gaining a victory as undeniable as that of a jubilant summer sun. Such was Milton, such Johnson, such Burke, such Wordsworth, such Disraeli, and such Bulwer. The success of these men looks less like the result of accident, or of popular caprice, or of magic, and more like the just and lawful, although late, reward of that high merit which unites moral energy with intellectual prowess, and becomes thus far more useful as an example and a stimulus to others. Not one in a hundred millions can expect such a tropical sunrise of success as befell Byron; but any one who unites a considerable degree of capacity with indomitable determination, may become, if not a Bulwer, yet in his own department an eminent and influential man.

We are still more struck with this perseverance, when we remember Bulwer's position in society. Possessed of rank

and ample fortune, he has labored as hard as any bookseller's hack in the empire; proving thus that his love for literature was as sincere as his ideal of it was high, and redeeming it from a certain shade of contempt which has of late, justly or unjustly, rested upon it. It cannot be denied that various causes, such as the poverty of many of our authors, and the mean shifts to which it has often reduced them; the dissipation and blackguardism of a few others; the envious spirit and quarrelsome disposition of a third class; the vast amount of mediocre writing which now pours from the press; the number of pretenders whom the hot and sudden sunlight of advancing knowledge has prematurely quickened into reptile life; not to speak of the engrossment of the public mind with commercial speculation and politics, and the contemptuous indifference of many of our aristocracy and many of our clergy to literary things and literary men, have all combined rather to lower Polite Letters in the eyes of the public. And nothing, on the other hand, can tend, or has tended more to reinstate it in its proper place of estimation than the fact, that not a few, distinguished and successful in other professions, in arts or in arms, at the bar or in the pulpit, have gloried in casting in their lot with this despised profession—have submitted to its drudgeries, borne its burdens, and aimed at and gained its laurels. Eminent lawyers have become *literateurs*. Eminent officers have become writers of travels. Eminent clergymen have become editors of periodicals and authors of scientific treatises. Eminent physicians, men of fashion, barristers, lords of session, and even peers of the realm, have all aspired to the honor connected with the name of Poet. And Bulwer has brought this to a bright climax, by blending the lustre of rank and riches with the distinctions of the highest literary celebrity. We fear that literature, as a profession, will never thrive to any great extent in this country. The gains of authors are becoming smaller and smaller in each section of the century; and the fact that all our literature threatens soon to be "afloat in the great gulf-stream of cheapness," will probably, *we* at least think, reduce them further still. In this case, we must depend more than ever upon the supplies from non-professional men, non-commissioned officers, shall we call them? in the great literary army. Nor need we fear that this will at

all deteriorate the value of literary productions. It will have, we think, precisely the opposite effect. Professional *litterateurs* are often forced by necessity to put to press productions totally unworthy of their talents, and in general to dilute and weaken by diffusion their powers. It is obvious that those who write only when leisure permits, and the spur of impulse excites, are less liable to this temptation. And looking both to the past and present, we find that the greatest and best, on the whole, of our writers have not been authors by profession. Shakspeare's profession was not authorship, but the stage. Milton was a schoolmaster and a secretary. Addison, too, was a secretary of state. Pope was a man of private fortune. Fielding was a justice. Richardson kept a shop—so did Godwin. Cowper lived on his patrimony, and on gifts from his relatives. Wordsworth was a stampmaster. Croly is a rector. John Wilson was a professor. Shelley was a gentleman of fortune, and heir to a baronetcy. Byron was a peer. Carlyle has an estate. Browning is a man of fortune and family. Of Jeffrey, Macaulay, Sidney Smith, Hall, and Foster, we need not speak. And our present hero is the proprietor of Knebworth, as well as a scholar, orator, wit, novelist, and poet.

We close this paper by expressing our very hearty congratulations to Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer on his recent reception and appearances in Edinburgh; our warm gratitude for the hours of pleasure and profit his numerous works have given us; and an ardent wish that his future life may be calm and bright; and that the current of thought and feeling in his future works may take, still more decidedly than of late, a practical and a Christian course, and catch on its last waves the hues of heaven's light, blended with the tints of fancy and of poetry!

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## NO. VII.—BENJAMIN DISRAELI.\*

THERE are two races, the contrast between whose former and present position is so deep and marked, as to produce the most melancholy reflections. We refer, of course, to the Greeks and the Jews. The ancient Greek was the noblest of nature's children; he was not so much a man as he was a petty god—or, rather, some statue that had walked down from its pedestal. Mrs. Jameson says of the Venus de Medici, that she looks as if she *would* come down if she *could*, while the Hercules Farnese looks as if he *could* come down if he *would*. Were he thus to desoend, he were the *alter idem* of the nobler of the ancient Greeks, in whom beauty and grandeur met together—elegance and energy embraced each other—and in whom, if symmetry seemed sometimes to disguise strength, strength was ever present, albeit half-seen, to support the symmetry. Their very children were taught to contend for prizes for beauty, and had statues erected to them if they succeeded. Their style of dress was itself a dream of beauty. Their language was as picturesque as it was expressive and rich. They inhabited a country which to all the romantic variety of Scottish landscape added the richness and warmth of an oriental clime; now towering up into the snowy grandeur of Olympus, and now softening into the unparalleled luxuriance of the Vale of Tempe; here rugged as the defile of Thermopylæ, and there panoramic as the Bay of Athens. The creations of their genius were just the projected images of their own beautiful selves. The heroes of their song were themselves, in shapes of sublime trial and ideal contest. Their gods were themselves—walking on the mountain-tops of imagination, and covered with celestial glory as with snow. Their hell was the contorted reflections of their own Macedonian defiles or Albanian deserts; and their heaven was the colored image of their own Cretan vales. Towering over this magnificent people—the heroes of a hero-land, the Mont Blancs of a mountain region—were the grand men of Greece, men whose names sound

\* The Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli, M. P.: a Literary and Political Biography, addressed to the New Generation.—Tancred. By B. DISRAELI.

yet like peals of thunder—Pericles, Epaminondas Demosthenes, Socrates, Aristotle, Alexander, Plato, Homer—in whom the beauty of the land became all but divine, its strength Herculean, and its sublimity that of an Alp in the evening sun, or a hero of celestial race when his set time is come, and when he feels himself growing into a god. And then its statuary, so cool, and clear, and bright; and its oratory and logic, naked, nervous, and gigantic as a Thracian gladiator; and its drama, at once formal and fiery, passionate as the bosoms and one as the wall of Pandemonium; and its philosophy, seeking to draw down the secrets of the gods to men, even as Franklin afterwards led down the lightning from its cavern like a lion in a leash, and yoked it to the majestic car of human progress; and its poetry, either in its narratives and pictures, clear and literal as a mirror in the state-chamber of kings—or, in its choruses and dramatic raptures, deep and dithyrambic as that melancholy music which seeks, it is said, not altogether in vain, to soothe the agonies of the lost, and

"To mitigate and suage,  
With solemn touches, troubled thoughts, and chase  
Anguish, and doubt, and fear, and sorrow, and pain,  
From mortal or immortal minds!"

Such was Greece, such were the Grecians. What is it, and what are they, now? Even in their late won and blood-cemented freedom, what are they? Alas! we must still say,

"'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more;"

and throw the shroud of silence over the corpse of the beautiful!

Still more striking, however, is the contrast between the ancient and the modern Jews. As the Greeks were the favorite people of nature, the Jews were the chosen people of God. As the Greeks seemed their own deities come down to men, the Jews were the representatives of that inscrutable ONE who filleth immensity, and the praises thereof. In Him they lived, and moved, and had their being. As a nation, they rose and sunk on God as on a wave—now heaven-high, and now deep as the centre. Their progress seemed the progress of God's plan in the world; their decline the temporary retreat of the awful billow. In their prosperity they were like angels basking in the face of their Father—under their beat-

ings and burdens they still continued, like Balaam's ass, to see God where none else beheld him. Along with the meteors which marked their advance in the wilderness—the pillars of fire and of cloud—there hung a mystic haze of miraculous destiny over all their motions. God cut a passage for them through the water of the Red Sea, and through the fire of that great and terrible wilderness. He translated them while yet alive to himself, and lo! the nation became as insulated as it was powerful; and was verily “a royal nation and a peculiar people.” He fed them with meat from heaven, and gave them drink from the depths which slumber under the rocks of the desert. When he slew them, it was by no hand but his own—Abraham slaying, as it were, his son; and heaps on heaps their “carcasses fell in the wilderness.” As he had lighted up the wilderness with strange splendors during their passage, and made Sinai speak to them in thunder, so, when he brought them into the Promised Land, it began to flow with milk and honey, to gleam with supernatural glory, and to ring with divine voices. In the midst of that land there arose, like a high palace, the Temple, with its marble and gold, its profound symbols, and mute and mighty prophecies; around were seen the stately steps of kings, walking like gods in the earth, because bearing in their hands the sceptres which God had lent, and was to resume; up steamed the smoke of incense, which, though ascending in volumes, hiding the sun, *hid not* the white garments and the oracular gems of the ministering priests; on every side were heard the cries of prophets speaking from the immediate inspiration of the Most High, and whose eyes shone with the lustre of very visions of God; and behold! to it at length arrived God's only begotten Son, meek and lowly, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, riding upon an ass, and yet welcomed by hosannas, which first echoed by all Jerusalem, at last were taken up by distant lands, and have swelled into a diapason as wide as the world. A nation so peculiar and so sacred were the Jews, that, even when bowed, broken, and dispersed at last, it was under a burden no less weighty than the blood of the Eternal Son of God. His blood, invoked by, fell on them like a fiery rain; and, staggering and shrieking under it, they have wandered ever since among the nations.

Such were they; but how great the change! Hear the

words of that master in our literary Israel, Scott, on this subject:—" 'Thou hast spoken the Jew,' said Rebecca to Bois-Guilbert, 'as the persecution of such as thou art has made him. Heaven in ire has driven him from his country, but industry has opened up to him the only road to power and to influence, which oppression has left unbarred. Read the history of the ancient people of God, and tell me if those by whom Jehovah wrought such marvels among the nations were then a people of misers and usurers ! And know, proud knight, we number names amongst us to which your boasted northern nobility is as the gourd compared to the cedar—names that ascend far back to those high times when the Divine Presence shook the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and which derive their splendor from no earthly prince, but from *the awful voice which bade their fathers be nearest of the congregation to the Vision*. Such were the princes of the House of Jacob.' Rebecca's color rose as she boasted the ancient glories of her race; but faded, as she added with a sigh, 'Such were the princes of Judah—now such no more. They are trampled down like the shorn grass, and mixed with the mire of the ways.' "

The spectacle of the decay of the Greeks is not nearly so melancholy as that of the Jews. The Greeks resemble dethroned kings; the Jews banished angels. The one nation has fallen from an earthly height; the other, like Lucifer, from heaven. The Greeks have always met with sympathy; there is, even still, a strong and fierce prejudice burning against the Jews. The Greeks have made very considerable efforts to recover from their degradation; the Jews, as a class, are still writhing in the dust of mean callings, and of the still lower spirit of contempt with which these are regarded. No one, when a Greek passes, cries out in scorn, "There's a Greek;" but many, when they see the dark eye and bent figure of a son of Abraham passing by, still sneer out the bitter taunt, "There's a Jew." Still, too true is the memorable contrast of Coleridge, as expressing the two uttermost poles of national condition—between the cry of Isaiah, "Hear, oh heavens, and give ear, oh earth!" and that of "Old Clo'" from a street-broker.

We fancy that we perceive the continued prevalence of this



ungenerous feeling in the recent attacks of a large portion of the press upon Benjamin Disraeli; and we shall try, in this paper, to do all we can to counteract it. We are no Jews nor Greeks either; no admirers of Disraeli's political character, or of all his literary works; but we love fair play; we know Disraeli to be a man of high genius, and altogether independent of our praise; but we know also, how easy it is for base underlings, and an irresponsible gang of minor and malignant critics, to injure any reputation, and derogate from any name, and wish to devote a paper to place this brilliant man's literary merits in a proper point of view.

Before giving our own opinion of Disraeli's literary and intellectual qualities, we have a few remarks to make on that biography of him which now lies before us. It is an able production, but it is neutralised in a great measure by its spirit of fierce, slow, partisan, bloodhound hatred. Every line of it is written in revenge as in red ink. We know nothing positively of the author; but one might imagine that it was the work of the dismissed secretary, or the disgraced valet of the brilliant Hebrew. Since Bourrienne's *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, we remember no book which sets itself with such deliberate determination, with such unflagging animosity, with such remorseless malignity of purpose, to damage a public character. Even its concessions are meant to be fatal, and its praise is always the prelude to a sentence of perdition. Emerson speaks of some whose "blame is a kind of praising"—this author's praise is a kind of blaming. To renew a former figure, you hear the voice the *sleuth-hound* in every paragraph. Now it is a deep-mouthed, incessant bay; now it is the growl of disappointment at finding the scent cold; and now it is the cry of fresh delight at coming upon it again. Were there but two beings in the earth, and these two enemies, they would but typify Benjamin Disraeli and his unknown biographer. The latter, at least, writes as if he were created for the purpose of trying to degrade and dishonor the name of the former.

Now, without judging as to the motives, we beg leave to demur as to the wisdom of the course here pursued. If Disraeli be such a tenth-rate man as this biography would imply, whence this extreme eagerness to vilify and blacken him? If he be little else than a fool, why be at such pains to prove

him a villain? The very effort and elaboration exerted in demonstrating the latter of these propositions, show that the former is felt to be a falsehood. The two parts of the biography—the “literary” and the “political”—in fact, clash against and extinguish each other.

We promised in the introduction not to enter on Disraeli's political career. We have not, in fact, studied it closely, except in the pages of this biography; but these, while professing to teach the contrary, have convinced us that, more than nine-tenths of our statesmen, Disraeli has been guided by a thought—a great, glittering, one “Star” suspended in the sky of his soul—which, be it from heaven or hell, he has faithfully followed, so faithfully, that *its* revolutions and changes have been confounded with *his*!

But we pass to his literary character; and here his biographer has done him very gross injustice. Whoever this writer may be, he is but a sorry judge of literature. The only indication of good taste he gives is his unbounded admiration of the wisdom and genius of Edmund Burke. While coinciding to the depths of our heart with this, we venture, first, to ask if Burke was, *outwardly*, the most consistent of authors or statesmen; and, secondly, would recommend to this author Burke's style, as a better model, both for political and literary discussion, than those he seems to have copied. He has not, indeed, imitated the insufferable verbiage, misty bewilderment, and stilted platitudes which cripple the writings of the powerful and highly cultured William Gladstone, of whom he is such an admirer; but he has evidently read too long and too lovingly the lucubrations of the “Morning Chronicle,” and similar scribes of the London press, and should, like other half-trained boys (young or *old*), be remanded to his studies. We had not, we must say, read “Alroy,” till our attention was pointed to it by the abuse of this writer. We thank him, with all our soul, for that emasculated and envious attack! It has introduced us to one of the finest of modern prose-poems. There are, indeed, two objections which may be started to it:—one, its form, which is too Frenchified, reminding you, in its short chapters, and abrupt transitions, and glancing hints of thought, of “Candide;” and the second (one which his biographer presses against him with all his

might), the peculiar rhythm of the more ambitious passages, which makes parts of it seem hybrids between poetry and prose. But, after deducting these faults, the tale is one of uncommon interest. Some of the situations are thrilling to sublimity, and the language and imagery are intensely oriental, and in general as felicitous as they are bold. Yet this biographer denies that "Alroy" is a poem, that its language is poetical; and even wonders that its author has thought it worth while to republish it! In disproof of these assertions, we simply refer our readers to the picture of Alroy's flight into the wilderness; to the description of the simoon; to the visit of Alroy to the sepulchres of the kings; to his immurement in the dungeon; to the escape of Abidan; and to the closing scene. These passages we consider equal—in interest, in terse description, in rapid power, and in frequent grandeur—to anything in the whole compass of fictitious literature. The book altogether ranks very near "Caliph Vathek," and is incomparably superior to all other modern imitations of the oriental manner, unless we except "Salathiel," that eloquent and powerful product of Dr. Croly's genius. The biographer before us—whom again we proclaim, although a sagacious and clever man, to be no judge of poetry or literary merit—tears some of the more extravagant passages from the context, and makes them look ludicrous enough. This is not fair. In proof of this, we can say that one or two of them, which seemed absurd as transferred to his cold and critical page, and contrasted with his occidental and icy spirit, when read by the glowing eastern day shed through Disraeli's genius over the whole of this prose "Thalaba," assumed to us a very different aspect; and if we still call them "*barbaric* pearl," we felt that, nevertheless, *pearl* they were. Few things can be more beautiful, in its own warm, voluptuous, Song-of-Solomon style, than the following (which the biographer, had he quoted, would have pronounced ridiculous):—

"It is the tender twilight hour, when maidens in their lonely bower, sigh softer than the eve. The languid rose her head upraises, and listens to the nightingale, while his wild and thrilling praises from his trembling bosom gush; the languid rose her head upraises, and listens with a blush. In the clear and rosy air, sparkling with a single star, the sharp and spiry

cypress-tree rises like a gloomy thought, amid the flow of revelry.

"A singing bird, a single star, a solemn tree, an odorous flower, are dangerous in the tender hour, when maidens, in their twilight bower, sigh softer than the eve! The daughter of the caliph comes forth to breathe the air: her lute her only company. She sits down by a fountain's side, and gazes on the waterfall. Her cheek reclines upon her arm, like fruit upon a graceful bough. Very pensive is the face of that bright and beauteous lady. She starts: a warm voluptuous lip presses her soft and idle hand. It is her own gazelle. With his large and lustrous eyes, more eloquent than many a tongue, the fond attendant asks the cause of all her thoughtfulness."

This we do not call perfect writing; it does not answer to our highest standard of even the prosaico-poetic style; but, separated from its context as it is, will any one say that it is absurd? Will any man connected with literature, unless he be a hired hack-accuser, pretend that it is not poetry?

Still finer and loftier things than what we have quoted abound in this poem; and "Iskander," which is bound up along with it, is worthy of the fellowship; for, if less poetical and brilliant, it is equally interesting, and much more nervous and simple in style. In one thing Disraeli excels all novelists—we mean rapidity of narration. With what breathless speed does he hurry his reader along! Iskander at the bridge reminds you of Macaulay's Horatius in the first of his "Lays of Ancient Rome:" the story is somewhat similar, and is told with the same animation, and the same eager rush of power.

We do not think it necessary to continue the examination of his works individually. We may say, however, that "Tancred" contains much of the same poetic matter with "Alroy;" but is chastened down with severer taste, and displays a vastly more matured intellect. His pictures of Gethsemane—of Bethany—of Sinai, are never to be forgotten. They serve better than a thousand books of travels to bring before our view that land where God did desire to dwell; and every spot in which, from Lebanon to the Dead Sea—from Bashan to Carmel—from the borders of Tyre to Hebron—from the Lake of Galilee to the Brook Kishon, is surrounded with the

halo of profound and unearthly interest. In one point we notice an improvement on "Alroy." There is in "Tancred" a distinct recognition of the mission of Jesus Christ; and the allusions to him and his history are full of fervid admiration and solemn reverence. Disraeli has at last learned that it is the sublimest distinction of his race that from it sprang One whose name has been a Crown to the earth more magnificent than though a brighter ring than Saturn's had been folded around it; whose character has formed the ideal of God, the pattern of man, and the moral spring of society—who has carried Jewish blood with him aloft to the very Throne of God; and in whose steadfast smile, streaming forth from Jerusalem, all nations and all worlds are yet to be blessed.

We pass to analyse, in a general way, Disraeli's intellectual powers. These are exceedingly varied. He has one of the sharpest and clearest of intellects, not, perhaps, of the most philosophical order, but exceedingly penetrating and acute. He has a fine fancy, soaring up at intervals into high imagination, and marking him a genuine child of that nation from whom came forth the loftiest, richest, and most impassioned song which earth has ever witnessed—the nation of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Solomon, and Job. He has little humor, but a vast deal of diamond-pointed wit. The whole world knows his powers of sarcasm. They have never been surpassed in the combination of savage force, and, shall we say, Satanic coolness, of energy and of point, of the fiercest *animus* within, and the utmost elegance of outward expression. He wields for his weapon a polar icicle—gigantic as a club—glittering as a star—deadly as a scimitar—and cool as eternal frost. His style and language are the faithful index of these varied and brilliant powers. His sentences are almost always short, epigrammatic, conclusive—pointed with wit and starred with imagery—and so rapid in their bickering, sparkling progress! One, while reading the better parts of his novels, seems reading a record of the conversations of Napoleon.

We saw, in a late Edinburgh journal, a comparison of Disraeli to Byron; he seems to us to bear a resemblance, still more striking, to Bonaparte. The same decisive energy; the same quick, meteoric motions; the same sharp, satiric power; the same insulation, even while mingling among men; the

same heart of fire, concealed by an outside of frost; the same epigrammatic conciseness of style, alternating with barbaric brilliance; the same decidedly Oriental tastes, in manner, language, equipage, everything; the same rapidity of written and spoken style; the same inconsistency, self-will, self-reliance, belief in race and destiny; the same proneness to fatal blunders, and the same power of recovering from their effects, and of drowning the noise of the fall in that of the daring flight which instantly succeeds it, distinguish both the soldier and the statesman. Indeed, the character and history of David Alroy seem a fictitious representation of Napoleon, as well as a faintly-disguised *alias* of the author's own character and anticipated career. Napoleon himself, we have always thought, had more of the Jew in him than of either the Frenchman or the Italian, although he unquestionably combined something of all the three. He had the Frenchman's bustling activity and fiery irritability of temper; the Italian's slow, deep, long-winded subtlety of revenge; and the Jew's superstition (although not his religion), his high-toned purpose, his hot blood, and his figurative fancy. He was infinitely more of an oriental sultan than of an occidental prince; and had he, instead of seeking in vain to conciliate the Mahometans by a pretended faith in their prophet, given himself out as the Messiah of the Jews, the whole Hebrew race would have flocked to his standard. As it was, he did visit the Holy Land, he "set up his standard on the glorious holy mountain"—gave battle under the shadow of Tabor—and received in Palestine the first whiff of that fell blast which was ultimately to overthrow his empire, and to reduce it to the most magnificent of ruins—the Coliseum of fallen monarchies.

To return to Disraeli, our great plea for him is this—he has fought in his own person the battle of a whole race; baffled oft, he has perpetually returned to the charge; placed at desperate odds, and opposed by strongest prejudices, he has, by energy, intellect, and indomitable perseverance, triumphed over them all. We care not what his enemies may choose to call him—an adventurer, a puppy, a *roué*, a charlatan, are a few of the hard names which have been flung against him, and they may contain in them a degree of truth; but no such shower of hailstones can prevail to hide from our view that

Figure sitting down amid the hisses and laughter of a whole House of Commons, with the words, "I will sit down now, but the time will come when *you will listen to me.*" This was not the language of mere petulance and injured conceit. It was that of a man driven, by insult and obloquy, to consult the very depths of his self-consciousness, which sent up an answer in oracle and in prophecy. The proof of anything that professes to be prophetic, lies, of course, in the fulfillment. And his prediction was, need we say, fulfilled. Within seven years or less, this rejected and despised member of the Commons is speaking to the largest, most attentive, and most amused and thrilled assemblages ever convened within its walls—is castigating Sir Robert Peel, and drawing blood at every blow—is ruling the Conservative party—and is treated with respect even by O'Connell, his erst most contemptuous and formidable foe. A year or two more, he is the leader of the Commons and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. *This* we say, is true power, and we cannot but exult, much as we do differ in many important matters from Disraeli, in witnessing the rapid rise of this scion of a despised and proscribed family to the height of reputation and influence; and cannot but compare it to the history of the shepherd-boy of Bethlehem, who passed, by a few strides, from waiting on the ewes with young to the summit of fame as a poet, and of power as a king.

We like, we must say again, the merit that struggles into success infinitely more than that which attains an early, and quick, and easy triumph. Look at the career of Macaulay, and compare it with Disraeli's. The former rose instantly into popularity as a writer; he rose instantly into fame as a parliamentary orator. Till his richly-deserved rejection by Edinburgh, there was not a single "crook" in his "lot." Even that city has since degraded itself by kneeling, "like a tame elephant," to receive once more its imperious rider. Disraeli's motto, on the other hand, like Burke's, was *Nitor in adversum*; and, like him, at every turnpike he had to present his passport. If Macaulay seem more consistent, it has been because he has always run in the rut of a party, and never entertained really bold, broad, and independent views. Macaulay, once exalted, can kick at those who are farther down than himself;

but he never could have had the moral heroism to have looked up from the dust of contempt into which he had been hurled by six hundred of his peers, and to have said, "the time will come that you *will* listen to me." We are far from comparing Disraeli to Macaulay, in point of learning, taste, or nervous energy of style; but we are convinced that, in inventiveness, ingenuity, originality, and natural power of genius, he is superior.

At the word "originality," we see some of our readers starting, and recalling to their minds the "plagiarisms" of Disraeli. We have often had occasion to despise popular clamors against public men, especially when swelled by the voices of a needy, mendacious, and profligate press; but there has been seldom a clamor more utterly contemptible than that raised against Disraeli for plagiarism. There lives not, nor ever perhaps lived, a literary, or clerical, or parliamentary man, who has not now and then, in the strong pressure of haste, been driven to avail himself of the labors of others, whether by the appropriation of thought or of language, of principles or of passages. Think of Milton, Mirabeau, Fox, Chalmers, Hall—all these were guilty of appropriations considerably larger than any charged against Disraeli. Milton has been called the "celestial thief;" Mirabeau got the ablest of his speeches from Dumont; Fox was often primed by Burke. Most of the thinking in Chalmers's "Astronomical Discourses" is derived from Andrew Fuller's "Gospel its own Witness." Many of Hall's brightest gems of figure are taken from others—from Burke, Grattan, and Warburton—and one or two of them have been retaken by Macaulay from Hall. Plagiarism, in the shape of petty larceny, is so general, that it has ceased to be counted a crime; it is only the habitual thief, the man who *lives* by plunder, and who plunders on a large scale, that deserves the halter. Now Disraeli is not such a man. His works and speeches are before the world; the Argus-eyes of a multitudinous envy have long been fixed upon them, and the result has been that not above two or three passages have been proved to be copied from other writers, and all his more brilliant and characteristic works—"Alroy," "Iskander," "Coningsby," "Contarini Fleming," "The Young Duke," and "Tancred"—are, *intus et in cute*,



his own. Are there ten living writers of whom the same, or anything approaching to the same statement, can be made?

We know not a little of the workings, open or secret, both of the clerical and of the literary worlds; and are certain that there never was a period in which more mean, malignant, and deplorable envy and detraction were working, whether openly or covertly, both among authors and divines—an envy that spares not even the dead, that spits out its venom against names which have long been written as if in stars on the firmament of reputation, but which wars especially with those living celebrities who are too honest to belong to any party, too progressive to be chained to any formula, too great to be put down, but not too great to be reviled and slandered, and whose very independence and strongly pronounced individuality become the principal charges against them. Who shall write the dark history of that serpentine stream of slander which is winding through all our literature at present like one of the arms of Acheron, and which is damaging the public and the private characters, too, of many a man who is entirely unaware of the presence and the progress of the foul and insidious poison? He that would lay bare the shameful secret history of many of our influential journals, and of our church cliques, would be a benefactor to literature, to morality, to religion, and to man.

Since beginning this paper, our attention has been called to the onslaught of the "Times" on Disraeli. It has forcibly recalled to our mind the words of Burns—

"Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us,  
To see ourselves as ithers see us!"

In describing Disraeli as the incarnation of genius without conscience, how faithfully has the "Times" described the general notion in reference to itself, provided the word "intellect" be substituted for "genius." For, with all the talent of the "Times," we doubt if it has ever displayed true genius, or if one paragraph of real inspiration can be quoted from amid its sounding commonplaces and brilliant insincerities. But talent, without even the pretence of principle, is so notoriously its characteristic, that we marvel at the coolness with which it takes off its own sobriquet, and sticks it on the brow of an-

other—marvel till we remember that the impudence of the leading journal is, like all its other properties, its mendacity, its mystery, its inconsistency, its tergiversation, its circulation, and its advertising, on a colossal scale.

We are not prepared as yet to *predict* the future history or the ultimate place of Benjamin Disraeli. One thing in him is most hopeful. He does not know, any more than Wellington or Byron, what it is to be beaten. His motto is, "Never say die." When newly down he is always most dangerous. Prodigious as is the amount of abuse and detraction he is now enduring, it may be doubted if he were ever so popular, or if there be a single man alive who is exciting such interest, or awakening such expectation. This proves, first, that he is no temporary rage or pet of the public; secondly, that he has something else than a selfish object in view; and, thirdly, that there is a certain inexhaustible stuff in him which men call genius, and which is sure to excite hope in reference to its possessor till the last moment of his earthly existence. Gladstone is a man of high talent; but few expect anything extraordinary from his future exertions. Disraeli is a man of genius, and many look for some grand conclusive display or displays of its power. Let him gird himself for the task. Let him forget the past. Let him pay no heed whatever to his barking, snarling opponents. Let him commit himself to some great new idea, or, at least, to some new and wider phase of his old one. He has been hitherto considerably like Byron in his undulating and uneven course, in the alternate sinking and swelling of the wave of his Destiny. Let him ponder that poet's last noble enterprise, by which he was redeeming at once himself and a whole nation when he died. Let Disraeli address himself to some kindred undertaking in *reference to the children of his people*; and then, as Byron died amid the blessings of the Greeks, may he inherit, in life, in death, and in all after-time, the gratitude and praises of God's ancient and still much-loved children—the Jews. We are hopeful that there is some such brilliant achievement before one of the few men of genius the House of Commons now contains.

## NO. VIII.—PROFESSOR WILSON.

IN our paper on Alexander Smith, we said that there was something exceedingly sweet and solemn in the emotions with which we watch the uprise of a new and true poet. And we now add, that exceedingly sad and solemn are the feelings with which we regard the downgoing and departure of a great old bard. We have analogies with which to compare the first of these events, such as the one we selected—that of the appearance of a new star in the heavens. But we have no analogy for the last, for we have never yet seen a star or sun *setting for ever*. We have seen the orb trembling at the gates of the west, and dipping reluctantly in the ocean; but we knew that he was to appear again, and take his appointed place in the firmament, and this forbade all sadness except such as is always interwoven with the feeling of the sublime. But were the nations authentically apprised that on a certain evening the sun was to go down to rise no more, what straining of eyes, and heaving of hearts, and shedding of tears would there be!—what climbing of loftiest mountains to get the last look of his beams!—what a shriek, loud and deep, would arise when the latest ray had disappeared!—how many would, in despair and misery, share in the death of their luminary!—what a “horror of great darkness” would sink over the earth when he had departed!—and how would that horror be increased by the appearance of the fixed stars,

“Distinct, but distant—clear, but ah, how cold!”

which in vain came forth to gild the gloom and supply the blank left by the departed king of glory! With some such emotions as are suggested by this supposition, do men witness the departure of a great genius. His immortality they may firmly believe in; but what is it to them? He has gone, they know, to other spheres, but has ceased to be a source of light, and warmth, and cheerful genial influence to theirs for ever and ever. Just as his life alone deserved the name of *life*—native, exuberant, overflowing life—so his death alone is worthy of the name—the blank, total, terrible name of death.

The place of the majority of men can easily be supplied, nay, is never left empty; but his cannot be filled up in *sæcula sæculorum*. Hence men are sometimes disposed, with the ancient poets, to excuse the heavens of envy in removing the great spirit from among them. But the grief becomes profounder still when the departed great one was the last representative of a giant race—the last monarch in a dynasty of mind. Then there seem to die over again in him all his intellectual kindred; then, too, the thought arises, who is to succeed?—and in the shadow of his death-bed youthful genius appears for a time dwindled into insignificance, and we would willingly pour out all the poetry of the young age as a libation on his grave.

Such emotions, at least, are crossing our minds as we contemplate the death of Christopher North, and remember that he was one of the last of those mighty men—the Coleridges, Wordsworths, Byrons, Campbells, Shelleys—who cast such a lustre on the literature and poetry of the beginning of the century. They have dropped away star by star, and not above two or three of the number continue now to glimmer: they can hardly be said to shine.

Wilson's death had been long expected, and yet it took the public by surprise. It seemed somehow strange that such a man could die. The words, "death of Professor Wilson," seemed paradoxical, so full was he of the riotous and overflowing riches of bodily and of mental being; and the exclamation "Impossible," we doubt not, escaped from the lips of many who could not think of him except as moving along in the pride of his magnificent personality—a walking world of life.

We propose while his grave is yet green, throwing a frail chaplet upon it, in addition to our former tribute, which, we are proud to say, was not rejected or despised by the great man to whom it was paid. We mean, first, to sketch rapidly the events of his history, and then to speak of his personal appearance, his character, his genius in its native powers and aptitudes, his achievements as a critic, humorist, writer of fiction, professor, poet, and periodical writer; his relation to his age; his influence on his country; and the principal defects in his character and genius.

We may premise that in the following outline of his life we

pretend to do nothing except state a few facts concerning him which are generally known. His full story must be told by others; if, indeed, it shall ever be fully told at all.

John Wilson was born in Paisley in the year 1785. We once, indeed, heard a sapient bailie, in a speech at a Philosophical soiree in Edinburgh, call him a "native of the modern Athens," but, although the statement was received with cheers, and although the worthy dignitary might have had sources of information peculiar to himself on the subject, we are rather inclined to hold by the general notion that he was a Paisley *body*, with a universal soul. In Paisley they still show the house where he was born, and are justly proud of the chief among their many native poets. No town in Scotland in proportion to its size, has produced more distinguished men than Paisley—Tannahill, Alexander Wilson, Motherwell (who spent his boyhood and youth, at least, in Paisley), and Christopher North, are only a few of its poetic sons. Wilson's father was a wealthy manufacturer in the town; his mother was a woman of great good sense and piety, and he imbibed from her a deep sense of religion. Paisley is a dull town in itself, but is surrounded by many points of interest. Near it is the hole in the canal where poor Tannahill drowned himself; farther off are the Braes of Gleniffer, commemorated in one of the same poet's songs. The river Cart—a river sung by Campbell—runs through the town, after passing through some romantic moorlands. Mearns Muir is not far away—a muir sprinkled with lochs, which Wilson has often described in his articles in "Blackwood," and on the remoter outskirts of which stands the farm-house where Pollok was born, and whence he saw daily the view so picturesquely reproduced by him in the "Course of Time," of

"Scotland's northern battlement of hills."

All these were early and favorite haunts of Wilson, who appears to have been what is called in Scotland a "royd' boy (roystering), fond of nutting, cat-shooting, fishing, and orchard-robbing expeditions; the head of his class in the school, and the leader of every trick and mischief out of it. At an early age he was sent to the Highlands, to the care of Dr. Joseph MacIntyre of Glenorchy, an eminent clergyman of the Church

of Scotland, who besides multifarious labors as a minister and a farmer, found time to superintend an academy for boarders. Our worthy father knew him well, and told us some curious traits of his character. He was a pious, laborious, intelligent, and, at the same time, a shrewd, knowing, somewhat close-fisted old *carle*. To his care Wilson, then a loose-hanging, tall, thin, bright-eyed boy, was sent by his father, and the doctor was very kind to him. He spent his holidays in rambling among the black mountains which surround the head of Loch Lomond, sailing on the lake, conversing with the shepherds, and picking up local traditions, which, on his return to the manse, he used to repeat to the doctor with such eloquence and enthusiasm, that the old man, his eyes now filled with tears, and now swimming with laughter, said again and again, "My man, you should write story-books." Wilson told us that this advice rang in his ears till it set him to writing the "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life." So let us honor the memory of the good old Oberlin of Glenorchy, whenever we read those immortal sketches. MacIntyre also, (who, though an eccentric and pawky, was a truly good man) did, we believe, not a little to rivet on the poet's mind the religious advices and instructions of his mother. It was probably owing to this, too, that Wilson displays in all his writings such a respect for the clerical character, and uniformly uses the word "manse" as if it were the word *home*.

From the school at Glenorchy he was sent to the University of Glasgow, which then mustered a very admirable staff of professors, as well as a noble young race of rising students. There was (a relative of our own, by the way) Richardson, Professor of Latin, a highly accomplished scholar and elegant writer, but whose works seem now in a great measure forgotten. There was Jardine of the Logic, a man of great industry, method, communicative gift, and fatherly interest in his students; in fact, as Lord Jeffrey and many others of his eminent pupils confessed, one of the best of conceivable teachers. There was Millar, the eminent writer on the Laws of Nations. And there was Young of the Greek chair, a man of burning enthusiasm, as well as of vast erudition, whose readings and comments on Homer made his students thrill and weep by turns. Our readers will find a glowing picture of him in

"Peter's Letters." The prelections of these men must have tended mightily to develop the mind of Wilson. He was benefited, too, by intimacy with many distinguished contemporary students. There was—a little later in the classes, but still contemporaneous—Lockhart, afterwards his associate in many a fair and many a foul-foughten field of letters. There was Michael Scott, author of "Tom Cringle's Log," who became a West Indian merchant, but returned to his native city, Glasgow, and wrote those striking naval narratives, under an assumed name in "Blackwood," without being discovered, till some little allusions to early days in one of the chapters betrayed the secret to Wilson, who cried out, "Aut Michael aut Diabolus!" his old college companion standing detected. There was a man, since well known in Scotland, and assuredly a person of very rare gifts of natural eloquence and humor—Dr. John Ritchie, late of Potterrow, Edinburgh—who used to contend with Wilson at leaping, football, and other athletic exercises, at which both were masters, and nearly matched. And there was Thomas Campbell, with whom Wilson passed many a joyous hour, both in Glasgow, and in frequent excursions, on their holidays, or in the summer vacation, into the near Highlands, and who in spite of diversities of taste and of politics, continued on friendly terms with him to the last.

At college, Wilson was, we believe, distinguished, as he had been at school, by irregular diligence, and by frequent fits of idleness, by expertness when he pleased at his studies, and by expertness at all times in games, frolics, and queer adventures. From Glasgow, he was sent to Magdalene College, Oxford, and there his character retained and deepened all its peculiar traits. He now read, and now dissipated hard, as most Oxford students of that day did. He took several college honors, and was the first boxer, leaper, cock-fighter, and runner among the students. He gained the Newdegate prize for poetry, and became in politics a Radical so flaming, that it is said he would not allow a servant to black his shoes, but might be seen—the yellow-haired, glorious savage—of a morning performing that interesting operation himself! He was contemporary with De Quincey, but they never met, at least wittingly; although we imagine the little bashful scholar must have sometimes seen, and rather shrunk, from the tall

athlete, rushing like a tempest on to the yards, or parading under the arches of the old Mediæval University.

At Oxford, Wilson became acquainted with Wordsworth's poetry. It made a deep and permanent impression upon his mind. He imagined that he found in it a union of the severe grandeur of the Grecian, with the wild charm of the Romantic school of poetry. It determined his bias toward subjective instead of objective song; materially, as we think, to his disadvantage. Wilson was by nature fitted to be, as a poet, a great compound of the subjective, and the subjective with the objective somewhat preponderating, but the influence of Wordsworth, counteracted only in part by that of Scott, made the subjective predominate unduly in his verse; and he who might have been almost a Shakspeare, had he followed his native tendency, became, in poetry, only a secondary member of the Lake School.

When he left Oxford, he betook himself to the Lake country, where his father had purchased the estate of Elleray, situated upon the beautiful shores of Windermere; and there became speedily intimate with Wordsworth, Southay, Coleridge, and De Quincey. This last describes him as being then a tall, fresh, fine-looking youth, dressed like a sailor, and full of frankness, eccentricity, and fire. He was at that time vibrating between various schemes of life, all more or less singular. He was now projecting an excursion into the interior of Africa, for he had always a strong passion for travel, and now determining to be, for life, a writer of poetry. He contributed some fine letters to Coleridge's "Friend," under the signature of Mathetes. A misunderstanding, however, arose between them, and they became estranged for a season. Wordsworth's overbearing dogmatism, too, was rather much for Wilson. In truth, he felt himself somewhat overcrowded, and knew in his heart that he had no right to be so, yet he continued to admire both these Lake Demiurgi, and became their most eloquent interpreter to the public.

While at Elleray, but considerably later than this (in the year 1810, we think), he met and married his amiable wife. His life previous to this had been a very romantic and adventurous one. We might recount a hundred floating stories about it, but were assured a little before his death, upon his own au-



thority, that they were in general a "pack of lies;" so that we refrain from more than alluding to them. He was always gipsy, or no gipsy—waiter, or no waiter—the gentleman, the genius, and the kind-hearted, affable man. His first poem was the "Isle of Palms," which was welcomed as a very promising slip of the Lake poetic tree, and criticised with considerable favor by Jeffrey, who showed in the article a desire to wean the young bard from his favorite school of "pond poets." In 1814, he came to reside in Edinburgh, and was called, nominally, to the bar. We are not certain, however, if he ever had a single brief, or pled a single case. But what an apparition among the lawyers of that day, who, if Carlyle may be credited, "believed in nothing in earth, heaven, hell, or under the earth," must have been this wild-eyed and broad-shouldered enthusiast, with his long-flowing locks! In 1817 "Blackwood's Magazine" was started, and shortly after, Wilson, who was now dividing his time between Edinburgh and Ellersay, was added to its staff, and began that wondrous series of contributions, grave and gay, satiric and serious, mad and wise, nonsensical and profound, fierce and genial, which were destined to irradiate or torment its pages for a quarter of a century. Lockhart became his principal coadjutor, and they both set themselves to write up Toryism, to write down the "Edinburgh Review," to castigate the Cockney School, and to illustrate the manners, and maintain the name among the nations of the earth, of "puir auld Scotland." The success of "Blackwood" was not, as seems now generally thought, instantaneous and dazzling; it was slow and interrupted; it had to struggle against great opposition, and many prejudices. It got into some disgraceful scrapes, particularly in the case of the melancholy circumstances that led to the death of poor John Scott—circumstances still somewhat shrouded in mystery, but which certainly reflected very little credit on either of the editors of "Ebony." "*Blackguard's Magazine*" was its sobriquet for many a long year, and not till Lockhart and MacGinn had left it for England, did the kindlier and better management of Wilson give it that high standing, which under the coarse and clumsy paws of his son-in-law—the "Laureate of Clavers"—it is again rapidly losing.

Between the starting of "Blackwood" and Wilson's elec-

tion to the Moral Philosophy chair, we remember nothing very special in his history, except his writing his first and last paper in the "Edinburgh Review," which was a brilliant article on Byron's fourth Canto of "Childe Harold," and the appearance of his "City of the Plague." From this much was expected, but it rather disappointed the public. It had beautiful passages, but, as a whole, was "dull, somehow dull." It aspired to be both a great drama and a great poem—and was neither. Two or three pages of it are still remembered, but the poem itself has gone down, or, rather, never rose.

Galled at its reception, the author mentally resolved, and he kept his resolution, to publish no more separate poems. In 1820 Dr. Thomas Brown died, and Wilson was urged by his friends, especially by Sir Walter Scott, to stand a candidate for the vacant chair of Moral Philosophy. It was desirable, they thought, that that should be filled by one who was a Conservative (Wilson had long ago renounced his Radicalism), and who had genius and mettle besides. It was thought good, too, that such a man should now have a settled position in society. His pretensions were fiercely opposed. When a boy, we fell in with a file of old "Scotsmans," dated 1820, and assure our readers that they could scarcely credit the terms in which Wilson was then assailed. (And yet why say this, after the recent brutal assaults on his dust by the creatures of the "Ass-ensæum," and others of the London press?) He was accused of blasphemy, of writing indecent parodies on the Psalms, of being a turncoat, of having no original genius, of having written a bad bombastic paper in the "Edinburgh Review," &c. &c. The "Scotsman" did not then seek to "damn with faint praise," but spoke out loud and bold. It had then, too, some *critical*, as well as much political, power. The fact was, party spirit was at that time running mountains high in Scotland, fomented greatly by the Queen's case; Wilson, besides, was as yet very little known; his poetry was not popular; his powers as a periodical writer were yet in blossom, and only his early eccentricities seemed to mark him out from the roll of common men. His opponent, Sir William Hamilton, too, was known to have devoted immense talent and research to the study of moral and mental science, while Wilson, it was shrewdly suspected, required to *cram* himself for

the office. Through dint of party influence, however, he was elected; and certainly none of the numerous c'lan of *Job-sons* has ever done more to redeem the character of the tribe. He cast a lustre even upon the mean and rotten ladder by which he had risen.

Scott had told Wilson (see "Scott's Life"), that when elected to the chair he must "forswear sack, purge, and live cleanly like a gentleman." And on this hint he proceeded to act. He commenced to prepare his lectures with great care; and his success in the chair was such as to abash his adversaries, and astonish even his friends. He became the darling of his students; and the publication of his "*Lights and Shadows*," and the "*Trials of Margaret Lyndsay*," contributed to raise his reputation, not only as a writer but as a man.

He continued still to write in "*Blackwood*," and when Lockhart, in 1826, went to London to edit the "*Quarterly Review*," Wilson became the unrestricted lord, although not the ostensible editor, of that magazine, with the history of which for ten years he was identified. How the public did, in these days, watch and weary for each First of the Month! for sure it was to bring with it either a sunny and splendid morning of poetic eloquence, or a terrible and sublime tornado of invective and satiric power. "Who is next," was the general question, "to be crowned as by the hand of Apollo, or to be scorched as by a wafture from the torch of the Furies?" The "*Noctes Ambrosianæ*" especially intoxicated the world. They resembled the marvels of genius, of the stage, and of ventriloquism united to produce one bewitching and bewildering whole. The author seemed a diffused Shakspeare, or Shakspeare in a hurry, and with a printer's "devil" waiting at his door. Falstaff was for a season eclipsed by the "Shepherd," and Mercutio and Hamlet together had their glories darkened by the blended wit and wisdom, pathos and fancy, of Christopher North. The power of these dialogues lay in the admirable combination, interchange, and harmonious play of the most numerous, diverse, and contradictory elements and characters. Passages of the richest and most poetical eloquence were intermixed with philosophical discussion, with political invectives, with literary criticism, with uproarious fun and nonsense, with the floating gossip of the day, and with the sharpest of small

talk. The Tragedy, the Comedy, and the Farce were all there, and the farce was no *after-piece*, but intermingled with the entire body of the play. The author interrupts a description of Glencoe or Ben Nevis, to cry out for an additional sausage, and breaks away from a discussion on the origin of evil to compound a tumbler of toddy. While De Quincey is explaining Kant's "Practical Reason," the Shepherd is grunting "Glorious" over a plate of hotch-potch; and from under North, who is painting a Covenanting martyrdom, Tickler suddenly withdraws the chair, and the description falls with the old man below the table. Each dialogue is in fact a miniature "Don Juan," jerking you down at every point from the highest to the lowest reaches of feeling and thought; and driving remorselessly through its own finest passages, in order to secure the effects of a burlesque oddity, compounded of the grave and the ludicrous, the lofty and the low. Each number in the series may be compared to a witch's cauldron, crowded and heaving with all strange substances, the very order of which is disorganisation, but with the weird light of imagination glimmering over the chaos, and giving it a sort of unearthly unity. Verily, they are Walpurgis Nights, these "Noctes Ambrosianæ." The English language contains nothing so grotesque as some of their ludicrous descriptions, nothing so graphic, so intense, so terrible, as some of their serious pictures; no dialogue more elastic, no criticism more subtle, no gossip more delightful, no such fine diffusion, like the broad eagle wing, and no such vigorous compression, like the keen eagle talon; but when we remember, besides, that the "Noctes" contain *all* these merits combined into a wild and wondrous whole, our admiration of the powers displayed in them is intensified to astonishment, and, if not to the pitch of saying, "Surely a greater than Shakspeare is here," certainly to that of admitting a mind of cognate and scarce inferior genius.

- Thus, for ten years did Wilson continue, in "Noctes," in reviews, in pictures of Scottish scenery and life, in criticisms on Homer, and Spencer, and the other great poets of the world, with undiminished freshness and force, to disport his leviathan powers. Sport, indeed, it was, for he seldom, it is said, employed more than three or four days in the month in

the preparation of his articles. When Magazine-day approached, his form ceased to be seen on Prince's Street, except at the stated hour when he walked to his class. He shut himself up, permitted his beard to grow, kept beside him now a tea-pot and now a series of soda-water bottles, and poured out his brilliant extemporisations, page after page, as fast as his broad quill could move, till perhaps the half of a "Maga" is written, and for another month the lion is free. In this improvisatore fashion, it is said, he wrote his Essay on Burns within a single week. Such irregular Titanic work, however, brought its penalties along with it, and he began by and by to "weary in the greatness of its way." His gentle wife was removed, too, about this time by death from his side, and the shock was terrible. It struck him to the ground. It unstrung a man who seemed before to possess the Nemean lion's nerve. He was found at this time, by a gentleman who visited him at Lasswade, feeble, almost fatuous, miserable, and unable to do aught but weep and moan, like a heartbroken child. But the end was not yet. He recovered by a mighty bound his elasticity of mind and energy of frame. He carried on his professional labors with renewed vigor and success. He bent again the Ulysses bow of "Blackwood," but never, it must be admitted, with the same power. His "Dies Boreales," compared to the "Noctes Ambrosianæ," were but as the days of Shetland in January, compared to the nights of Italy or of Greece in June.

We may here appropriately introduce the reminiscences of our own intercourse with him, which indeed was very slight and occasional. We had often gone in to hear him in his class, although our curriculum of study had taken place in another university; had not been fascinated at first, but had ultimately learned enthusiastically to admire his manner of teaching—of which more afterwards. In 1834, anxious to gain a verdict from a critic so distinguished, we ventured on an experiment, at the recollection of which we yet blush. We sent him in some Essays, professing to be by another. The result was of a sort we had not in our wildest dreams imagined. Suffice it that he spoke of them (without knowing their author) in a manner which not only bound us to him for life, but cheered and encouraged us mightily at that early

stage of our progress. When, years afterwards, the papers of the "First Gallery" appeared *seriatim* in the "Dumfries Herald," Wilson was no niggard encomiast, and it was greatly owing to his kindly words that we were induced to collect them into a volume. To himself, however, we had all this while never spoken, except for a few minutes in his class-room, till we called on him in 1844, along with a friend. At first the servant was rather shy, and spoke dubiously of the visibility of the professor; but, upon our sending up our names, we heard him on the top of the stairs growling out a hearty command to admit us. In a little he appeared, and such an apparition! Conceive the tall, strong, savage-looking man, with a beard wearing a week's growth, his hair half a twelvemonth's, no waistcoat, no coat, a loose cloak flung on for the nonce, a shirt dirty, and which apparently had been dirty for days, and, to crown all, a huge cudgel in his hand. He saluted us with his usual dignified frankness, for in his undress of manner as well as of costume, he was always himself; and, after asking us both to sit, and sitting down himself, he commenced instantly to converse on the subject nearest to him at the moment. He had been recently up at Loch Awe, for he loved, he said, to "see the spring come out in the Highlands." He had, besides, been visiting many of his old acquaintances there, "shepherds and parish ministers;" and then he enlarged on the character of his old friend Dr. MacIntyre. There was a full-length picture of Wilson when a boy on one side of the room, representing him as standing beside a favorite horse, and, sooth to say, somewhat "shauchly" he seemed in his juvenile form. The picture, he said, had been taken at the especial desire of his mother, and the terms in which he spoke of her were honorable to both parties. He then launched out on literary topics in his usual free but fiery style. He spoke a great deal about De Quincey, and with profound admiration. To Coleridge as a man, his feelings were less cordial. Altogether, we left deeply impressed with his affability and kindness, as well as with his great mental powers.

We met him but once more, at Stirling, on occasion of a great literary *conversazione*, held in that town, on the 10th January, 1849. His coming there had been announced, but was expected by no one, as it was during the Session of Col-

lege. Thither, however, he came, like a splendid meteor and was received with boundless enthusiasm. We remember, while walking along with him from dinner to the place of meeting, that some one remarked how singular it was (fact), "that Cholera and Christopher North had entered Stirling the same day." "And I the author of the 'City of the Plague,' too," was his prompt rejoinder. Never had there been such a night in Stirling, nor is there ever likely to be another such. His spirits rose, he threw his soul amidst his audience, like a strong swimmer in a full-lipped sea, touched by turns their every passion, and at last, by the simple words, rendered more powerful by the proximity of the spot, "One bloody summer-day at Baunockburn," raised them all to their feet in one storm of uncontrollable enthusiasm. More elaborate prelections from his lips we have heard, but never anything better calculated to move and melt, to thrill and carry away, and that, too, without an atom of clap-trap, a popular assembly.

We have, in common with many, seen and heard him in various other of his moods. We have seen him in the street, or in the Parliament House, or in the Exhibition, surrounded three deep by acquaintances, male and female, whom he was keeping in a roar of laughter, or sometimes hushing into a little eddy of silence, which seemed startling amidst the torrent of noisy life which was rushing around. We have watched him followed at noonday, through long streets, by enthusiasts and strangers, who hung upon his steps, and did "far off his skirts adore," and have seen him *monstrari digito*, a thousand times; sometimes we have thus followed, and thus pointed him out ourselves. And we have heard him again and again in the Assembly Rooms, and in his own class-room, addressing audiences, whom he melted, electrified, subdued, exploded into mirth, or awed into solemnity, at his pleasure, while he was discovering the secret springs of beauty and sublimity, of delight and of terror, of laughter and of tears.

In 1852 he saw the necessity of resigning his chair, owing to the increasing weakness of his frame. A pension of £200 was granted him by Lord John Russell. About a year ago symptoms of decay in his mental faculties are said to have been observed. From his cottage in Lasswade he was remov

ed to Edinburgh, and after various fluctuations, his spirit was at last mercifully released from that body which had become a "body of death," at twelve on the morning of Monday the 3d April.

We come now to the second part of our task—to speak of him critically as a Man and an Author. And in looking to him as a Man, we are compelled, first, to think of that magnificent presence of his to which we have alluded often, and may allude yet again, which ever haunts us, and all who have seen it. In the case of many the body seems to belong to the mind; in the case of Wilson, the mind seemed to belong to the body. You were almost tempted to believe in materialism, as you saw him, so intensely did the body seem alive, so much did it appear to ray out meaning, motion, and power, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. You thought, at other times, of the first Adam—the stately man of red clay, rising from the hand of the Almighty Potter. Larger and taller men we have seen, figures more artistically framed we have seen, faces more chastely chiselled, and "sick-lied o'er with the pale cast of thought," are not uncommon; but the power and peculiarity of Wilson's body lay in the combination of all those qualities which go to form a model man. There was his stature, about six feet two inches. There were his erect port and stately tread. There was his broad and brawny chest. There was a brow—lofty, round, and broad. There were his eyes, literally flames of fire, when roused. There were a nose, mouth, and chin, expressing, by turns, firmest determination, exquisite feeling, humor of the drollest sort, and fiery rage. And flowing round his temples, but not "beneath his shoulders broad," were locks of the true Celtic yellow, reminding you of the mane worn by the ancient bison in the Deu-Caledonian forests. "You are a man," said Napoleon, when he first saw Goethe. Similar exclamations were often uttered by strangers, as they unexpectedly encountered Wilson in the streets. Johnson said of Burke, that you could not converse with him for five minutes under a shed without saying, "this is an extraordinary man." But Burke had to open his mouth; his presence was by no means remarkable. In Wilson's case there was no need for uttering a single word; his face, his eye, his port, his chest, all united in silently shin-



ing out the tidings of what he was—the most gifted, and one of the least cultured of the sons of men.

“Cultured,” we mean in the ordinary sense of that word, for unquestionably he had received or given himself an education as extraordinary as was his genius. Yet there was a want of polish and finish about his look, his hair, his dress, and gesture, that seemed outré and savage, and which made some hypercritics talk of him as a splendid beast—a cross between the man, the eagle, and the lion. You saw at least one who had been much among the woods, and much among the wild beasts, who, like Peter Bell, had often

“Set his face against the sky,  
On mountains and on lonely moors,”

who had slept for nights among the heather, who had bathed in midnight lakes, and shouted from the top of midnight hills, and robbed eagles' eyries, and made snow-men, and wooed solitude as a bride; and yet, withal, there was something in his bearing which showed the scholar, the gentleman, the man of the world, and the waggish observer; and if one presumed on his oddity, and sought to treat him as a simpleton, or semi-maniac, he could resent the presumption by throwing at him a word which withered him to the bone, or darting at him a glance which shrivelled him up into remorse and insignificance. His eye was indeed a most singular eye. Now it glittered like a sharp sunlit sword; now it assumed a dewy expression of the slyest humor; now it swam in tears; now it became dim and deep under some vision of grandeur which had come across it; now it seemed searching every heart among his hearers; and now it appeared to retire and communicate directly with his own. And wo to those against whom it did rouse in anger! It was then Cœur De Leon in the “Talisman,” with his hand and foot advanced to defend the insulted banner of England.

Indeed, we marvel that no critic hitherto has noticed the striking similitude between Wilson, and Scott's portraiture of Richard the Lion-hearted. We are almost inclined to think that Sir Walter had him in his eye. Many of their qualities were the same. The same leonine courage and nobility of nature; the same fierce and ungovernable passions;

the same high and generous temper; the same love of adventure and frolic; the same taste for bouts of pleasure and lowly society; the same love of song and music; the same imprudence and improvidence; the same power of concentrating the passions of hot hearts and amorous inclinations upon their wives; and the same personal appearance to the very letter—in complexion, strength, and stature—distinguish the King and the Poet. Neither Richard nor Christopher was always a hero. The former enjoyed the humors of Friar Tuck as heartily as he did the minstrelsy of Blondel; and our lion-hearted Laker could be as much at home among peasants and smugglers, as he ever was with Wordsworth and Coleridge.

We have often heard Americans preferring the personal presence of Daniel Webster to that of Wilson. Webster we never saw, but, from descriptions and portraits, we have him somewhat clearly before our mind's eye. He was in appearance a tall, solemn, swarthy, thundrous-looking Puritan clergyman, clad always in black, not unlike James Grahame of the "Sabbath," Wilson's friend, but with a prodigiously more powerful expression on the eye and brow. He looked, in short, morally the very reverse of what he *was*; he seemed the model of a high-principled and conscientious man. Wilson's face and form were equally massive, far sunnier and far truer to his genial and unlimited nature.

As a man, Wilson was much misunderstood. Not only were his personal habits grossly misrepresented, but his whole nature was belied. He was set down by many as a strange compound of wilful oddity, boisterous spirits, swaggering ostentation, and true genius. Let us hear, on the other side, one who knew him intimately, and loved him as a son a father—our friend Thomas Aird. His words written since Wilson's decease, are identical with all his private statements to us on the same subject:—"He was singularly modest, and even deferential. His estimates of life were severely practical; he was not sanguine; he was not even hopeful enough. Those who approached the author of the 'Noctes' in domestic life, expecting exchanges of boisterous glee, soon found out their mistake. No writing for mere money, no 'dabbling in the pettiness of fame,' with this great spirit, in its own negligent grandeur, modest, quiet, negligent, because, amidst all the

beauty and joy of the world, it stood *waiting and wondering on vaster shores than lie by the seas of time.*"

These words are not only beautiful, but true; although they represent Wilson only in his higher moods. He could, and often did, indulge in boisterous glee, while, like many humorists, his heart within, was serious, if not sad enough. And this leads us to the question as to his faith—what was it? He was unquestionably of a deeply religious temperament; but he had not given it a proper culture. He was not, we think, satisfied with any of the present *forms* of the Christian religion; yet there was something in him far beyond nature-worship. His attitude indeed, was just that described by Aird. Like the spirits of Foster, Coleridge, Arnold, and many others in our strange era, while accepting Christianity as a whole, Wilson's spirit was "waiting and wondering" till the mighty veil should drop, and show all mysteries made plain in the light of another sphere. Had he more resolutely lived the Christian life in its energetic activities, and approved himself more a servant of duty, his views had perhaps become clearer and more consoling. And yet, what can we say? Arnold was a high heroic worker, nay, seemed a humble, devoted Christian, and yet died with a heart broken by the uncertainties of this transition and twilight age.

Many thought and called Wilson a careless, neglectful man. He was not indeed so punctual as the Iron Duke in answering letters, nor could he be always "fashed" with young aspirants. But this arose more from indolence than from indifference. He was to many men a generous and constant friend and patron. Few have had encouraging letters from him, but many have had cheering words, and a word from him went as far as a letter, or many letters from others.

We pass to speak of the constituents of his genius. These were distinguished by their prodigal abundance and variety. He was what the Germans call an "all-sided man." He had, contrary to common opinion, much metaphysical subtlety, which had not indeed been subjected, any more than some of his other faculties, to careful cultivation. But none can read some of his articles, or could have listened to many of his lectures, without the conviction that the metaphysical power was strong within him, and that, had he not by instinct been

taught to despise metaphysics, he might have become a metaphysician, as universally wise, as elaborately ingenious, as captiously critical, as wilfully novel, and as plausibly and profoundly wrong, as any of the same class that ever lived. But he *did* despise this science of pretensions, and used to call it "dry as the dust of summer." Of his imagination we need not speak. It was large, rich, ungovernable, fond alike of the Beautiful and the Sublime, of the Pathetic and the Terrible. His wit was less remarkable than his humor, which was one of the most lavish and piquant of his faculties. Add to this great memory, keen, sharp intellect, wide sympathies, strong passion, and a boundless command of a somewhat loose, but musical and energetic diction, and you have the outline of his gifts and endowments. He was deficient only in that plodding, painstaking sagacity which enables many commonplace men to excel in the physical sciences. If he ever crossed the "Ass' Bridge," it must have been at a flying leap, and with recalcitrating heels, and he was much better acquainted, we suspect, with the "Fluxions" of the Tweed, than with those of Leibnitz and Newton.

His powers have never, we think, found an adequate development. It is only the bust of Wilson we have before us. Yet let us not, because he has not done mightier things, call his achievements small; they are not only very considerable in themselves, but of a very diversified character. He was a critic, humorist, writer of fiction, professor, poet, and periodical writer. And, first, as a critic, criticism with him was not an art or an attainment; it was an insight and an enthusiasm. He loved everything that was beautiful in literature, and abhorred all that was false and affected, and pitied all that was weak and dull; and his criticism was just the frank, fearless, and eloquent expression of that love, that abhorrence, and that pity. Hence his was a catholic criticism; hence his canons were not artificial; hence he abhorred the formal, the mystical, and the pseudo-philosophic schools of criticism; hence the reasons he gave for his verdicts were drawn, not from arbitrary rules, but directly from the great principles of human nature. With what joyous gusto did he approach a favorite author! His praise fell on books like autumn sunshine, and whatever it touched it gilded and glorified. And when, on

the other hand, he was disgusted or offended, with what vehement sincerity, with what a noble rage, with what withering sarcasm, or with what tumultuous invective, did he express his wrath. His criticisms are sometimes rambling, sometimes rhapsodical, sometimes overdone in praise or in blame; often you are compelled to differ from his opinions, and sometimes to doubt if they are fully formed in his own mind, and in polish, precision, and depth, they are inferior to a few others; but, in heartiness, eloquence, variety, consummate ease of motion, native insight, and sincerity, they stand alone.

We have alluded to his extraordinary gift of humor. It was not masked and subtle, like Lamb's; it was broad, rich, bordering on farce, and strongly impregnated with imagination. It was this last characteristic which gave it its peculiar power, as Patrick Robertson can testify. This gentleman possesses nearly as much fun as Wilson, but in their conversational contests, Wilson, whenever he lifted up the daring wing of imagination, left him floundering far behind.

Good old Dr. MacIntyre, we have seen, thought Wilson's *forte* was fiction. We can hardly concur with the doctor in this opinion, for although many of his tales are fine, they are so principally from the poetry of the descriptions which are sprinkled through them. He does not tell a story well, and this because he is not calm enough. As Cowper says, he prefers John Newton, as a historian, to Gibbon and Robertson; because, while they *sing*, you *say* your story; and history is a thing to be said, not sung. Before we met this remark, we had *made* it in reference to Wilson and Scott. Scott *says* his stories, and Wilson *sings* them. Hence, while Wilson in passages is equal to Scott, as a whole, his works of fiction are greatly less interesting, and seem less natural. Wilson is a northern Scald, not so much narrating as pouring out passionate poetic rhapsodies, thinly threaded with incident; Scott is a Minstrel of the border, who can be poetical when he pleases, but who lays more stress upon the general interest of the tale he tells. Even in description he is not, in general, equal to Scott, and that for a similar reason. Wilson, when describing, rises out of the sphere of prose into a kind of poetic rhythm; Scott never goes beyond the line which separates the style of lofty prose from that of absolute poe-

try. Wilson is too Ossianic in his style of narration and description; and had he attempted a novel in three or four volumes, it had been absolutely illegible. Even "Margaret Lindsay," his longest tale, rather tires before the close, through its sameness of eloquence and monotony of pathos; only very short letters should be *all* written in tears and blood. And his alternations of gay and grave are not so well managed in his tales as in his "Noctes." Yet nothing can be finer than some of his individual scenes and pictures. Who has forgotten his Scottish Sunset, which seems dipped in fiery gold, or that Rainbow which bridges over one of his most pathetic stories, or the drowning of Henry Needham, or the Elder's Death-bed, or that incomparable Thunderstorm, which seems still to bow its giant wing of gloom over Ben Nevis and the glen below? In no modern, not even Scott, do we find prose passages so gorgeous, so filled with the intensest spirit of poetry, and rising so finely into its language and rhythm as these.

We have of late frequently applied, to apparently fine prose writing, the test of reading it aloud, and have judged accordingly of its rhythm, as well as of its earnestness and power. Few authors, indeed, can stand this. MacAll of Manchester's high-wrought paragraphs seem miserably verbose and empty when read aloud; Hamilton of Leeds' sentences are too short and disjointed to stand this test; and even Ruskin's most sounding and labored passages assume an aspect of splendid disease, of forced and factitious enthusiasm, when thus tried. All the better passages, on the other hand, of Hall, Chalmers, Foster, Scott, Croly, De Quincey, and, we add, of Macaulay, triumphantly pass the ordeal; and so, too, the descriptions in the "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life."

"Come back into memory, thou most brilliant and genial of all professors, as we have seen thee in the days of other years!" We enter the class-room, and take, we shall suppose, the most remote seat in the sloping array of benches. We find ourselves surrounded by youths of all varieties of appearance and diversities of standing, waiting, some eagerly, others with an air of perfect indifference, for the entrance of the professor. Yonder two are discussing the question whether Wilson be a real Christian, or a true poet. One is preparing his pencil for

making a caricature of his illustrious teacher another is mending his pen for the purpose of taking down notes of the lecture. A few are knocking their heels against the ground, because the morning is cold, and, perhaps, in a loud whisper discussing the merits of the leading "star" in the Royal Theatre, where they had been over night. Here and there you see strangers—some enthusiastic youths from England, or some clerical-looking gentlemen from the north of Scotland—whose fidgetty air tells you they are wearying for the appearance of the lion, and who seem regarding his class with feelings of unmixed contempt. At last you hear a certain bustle, and immediately after, there comes rushing along from the left-hand side a tall, yellow-haired man, in a gown, who steps up to the platform, and turns toward you eyes, a brow, a cheek, a chin, a chest, and a port, which instantly stamp him a Titan among the children of men. His hair rolls down his temples like a cataract of gold; his eyes are light-blue, sparkling, and at times so fierce, that they seem two loopholes opening into a brain of fire; his cheek is flushed by exercise and air into a rich manly red; his chin is cut like that of a marble Antinous; his chest is broad and ample, and seems ready either as a bulwark to break, or as a floodgate to let forth strong emotion; his lips are firmly set, yet mild; the aspect of the lower face is that of peach-like bloom, and peach-like peace, the aspect of the upper is that of high, rapt enthusiasm, like that of Apollo, looking up after the path of one of his sunny arrows; the port is erect—yet not haughty—high, yet not overbearing or contemptuous—and, ere he has opened his lips, you say internally, "I have found a man of the old heroic breed, strength and stature." He begins his lecture. For a little you are disappointed. His voice is deep, but seems monotonous; his utterance is slow; his pronunciation is peculiar; his gesture uncouth; what he says, is a rather confused and embarrassed repetition of a past lecture; and you are resigning yourself to a mere passive and wondering gaze at the *personnel* of the man, expecting nothing from his mouth, when the progress of his discussion compels him to quote a few lines of poetry, and then his enthusiasm appears, not rapidly bursting, but slowly defiling like a great army into view, his eye kindles, enlarges, and seems to embrace

the whole of his audience in one glance, his chest heaves, his arms vibrate, sometimes his clenched hand smites the desk before him, and his tones deepen and deepen down into abysses of pathos and melody, as if searching for the very soul of sound, to bring it into upper air. And, after thus having arrested you, he never for an instant loses his grasp, but, by successive shock after shock of electric power, roll after roll of slow thunder, he does with you what he wills, as with his own, and leaves you in precisely the state in which you feel yourself when awakening from some deep, delightful dream. He had, besides, certain great field-days, as a lecturer, in which, from beginning to end, he spoke with sustained and accelerating power: as when he advocated the Immortality of the Soul; describing the sufferings of Indian prisoners; explained his ideas of the Beautiful; or described the character of the Miser. The initiated among the students used to watch and weary for these grand occasions, and all who heard him then, felt that genius and eloquence could go no further, and that they were standing beside him on the pinnacle of intellectual power.

His poetry proper has been generally thought inferior to his prose, and beneath the level of his powers. Yet, if we admire it less, we at times we love it more. It is not great, or intense, or highly impassioned, but it is true, tender, and pastoral. It has been well called the "poetry of peace;" it is from "towns and toils remote." In it the author seems to be exiled from the bustle and conflict of the world, and to inhabit a country of his own, not an entirely "Happy Valley," for tears there fall, and clouds gather, and hearts break, and death enters, but the tears are quiet, the clouds are windless, the hearts break in silence, and the awful Shadow comes in softly, and on tiptoe departs. Sometimes, indeed, the solitude and silence are disturbed by the apparition of a "wild deer," and the poet is surprised into momentary rapture, and a stormy lyric is flung abroad on the winds. But, in general, the region is calm, and the very sounds are all in unison and league with silence. As a poet, however, Wilson was deficient, far more than as a prose writer, in objective interest, as well as in concentration of purpose. His poetry has neither that reflective depth which causes you to recur so frequently to the poetry of Wordsworth,



nor that dazzling lightness and brilliance of movement which fascinates you in Scott. It is far, too, from being a full reflection of his multifarious and powerful nature; it represents only a little quiet nook in his heart, a small sweet vein in his genius, as though a lion were to carry somewhere within his broad breast a little bag of honey, like that of the bee. It does not discover him as he is, but as he would wish to have been. His poetry is the Sabbath of his soul. And there are moods of mind—quiet, peaceful, autumnal moments—in which you enjoy it better than the poetry of any one else, and find a metaphor for its calm and holy charm in the words of Coleridge—

“ The moonbeams *sleep'd in silence*,  
The *steady weathercock*.”

The revolving, impatient wheel, the boundless versatility of Wilson's genius, quieted and at rest, as we see it in his poetry, could not be better represented than in these lines. In Coleridge, indeed, as in some true poets, we find all characters and varieties of intellect represented *unconsciously and by anticipation*, even as frost, fire, and rock-work—each contains all architecture and all art, silently anticipated in its varied forms and prophetic imitations.

In his periodical writings alone do we find anything like an adequate display of his varied powers. You saw only the half-man in the professor's chair, and only the quarter-man in his poetry; but in the “Noctes,” and the satirico-serious papers he scattered over “Blackwood,” you saw the whole Wilson—the Cyclops now at play, and now manufacturing thunderbolts for Jove; now cachinnating in his cave, now throwing rocks and mountains at his enemies, and now pouring out awful complaints, and asking strange, yet reverent queries in the ear of the gods.

Wilson's relation to his age has been, like Byron's, somewhat uncertain and vacillating. He has been, on the whole, a “lost leader.” He has, properly speaking, belonged neither to the old nor new, neither to the conservative nor to the movement, neither to the infidel nor the evangelical sides. Indeed, our grand quarrel with him is, that he was not sufficiently in earnest; that he did not with his might what his

hand found to do; that he hid his *ten* talents in a napkin; that he trifled with his inestimable powers, and had not a sufficiently strong sense of stewardship on his conscience. This has been often said, and we thought it generally agreed on, till our attention was turned to a pamphlet, entitled "Professor Wilson—a Memorial and Estimate," which, amid tolerably good points and thoughts here and there, is written in a style which, for looseness, inaccuracy, verbosity, and affected obscurity, baffles description, besides abounding in flagrant and, we fear, wilful mis-statements, and in efforts at fine writing, which make you blush for Scottish literature. The poor creature who indites this farrago of pretentious nonsense asserts that the "Life of Wilson seems to have been as truly fruitful as that of any author within the range of English literature," and proves the statement by the following portentous query:—"That *wild air* of the unexpressed poet, the inglorious Milton, the Shakspeare that might have been, what was it but a *rich spice* of the fantastic humor of the man, a part of that extraordinary character which so delighted in its sport, that, whether he jested on himself, or from behind a mask might be making some play of you, you knew not, nor were sure if it meant mirth, confidence, or a solemn earnest such as *he* only could appreciate?" What this may mean we cannot tell; but the writer becomes a little more intelligible when he speaks, in some later portion of his production, of the great popularity which Wilson's redacted and collected works are to obtain, not appearing to know the fact that the "Recreations of Christopher North," published some twelve years ago, have never reached a second edition, and that old William Blackwood, one of the acutest bibliopoles that ever lived, refused to republish Wilson's principal articles in "Maga;" nor did the "Recreations" appear till after Blackwood's death. Splendid passages and inestimable thoughts, of course, abound in all that Wilson wrote, but the want of pervasive purpose, of genuine artistic instinct, of condensation, and of finish, has denied true unity, and perhaps permanent power, to his writings. He will probably be best remembered for his "Lights and Shadows"—a book which, although not a full discovery of his powers, lies in portable compass, and embalms that fine nationality which so peculiarly distinguished

his genius. Probably a wise selection from his "Noctes," too, might become a popular book.

Wilson had every inducement to have done more than he did. He was a strong healthy nature; he had much leisure; he had great, perhaps too great facility of expression. He was the pet of the public for many years. But he did not, alas! live habitually in his "great Taskmaster's eye." We quarrel not with his unhappy uncertainties of mind; they are but too incident to all imaginative and thoughtful spirits. We quarrel not with his "waiting and wondering" on the brink of the unseen, but his uncertainty should not have paralysed and emasculated a man of his gigantic proportions. If beset by doubts and demons, he ought to have tried at least to fight his way through them, as many a resolute spirit has done before him. What had he to endure compared to Cowper, who for many years imagined that a being mightier than the fallen angels—Ahrimanes himself—held him as his property, and yet who, under the pressure of this fearful delusion, wrote and did his best, and has left some works which, while satisfying the severest critics, are manuals and household words everywhere? Wilson, on the other hand, seldom wrote anything except from the compulsion of necessity. Although not a writer for bread, much of his writing arose to the tune of the knock of the printer's "devil;" and his efforts for the advancement of the race, although we believe really sincere, were to the last degree fluctuating, irregular, and uncertain.

It is a proof, we think, of Wilson's weakness, as well as of his power, that he has been claimed as a possible prize on so many and such diverse sides. He might have been, says one, the greatest preacher of the age. He might have been, says another, the greatest actor of the day. He might have been, says a third, the greatest dramatist, next to Shakspeare, that ever lived. He might have been, says a fourth, a powerful parliamentary orator. He might have been, says a fifth, a traveller superior to Bruce or Park. Now, while this proves the estimation in which men hold his vast versatility, it proves also that there was something wrong and shattered in the structure of a mind which, while presenting so many angles to so many objects, never fully embraced any of them, and while displaying powers so universal, has left results so comparatively slender.

Nevertheless, after all these deductions, where shall we look for his like again? A more generous, a more wide-minded, a more courteous, and a more gifted man, probably never lived. By nature he was Scotland's brightest son, not, perhaps, even excepting Burns; and he, Scott, and Burns, must rank everlastingly together as the first Three of her men of genius. A cheerless feeling of desolation creeps across us, as we remember—that majestic form shall press this earth no more; those eyes of fire shall sound human hearts no more; that voice, mellow as that of the summer ocean breaking on a silver strand, shall swell and sink no more; and that large heart shall no more mirror nature and humanity on its stormy yet sunlit surface. Yet long shall Scotland, ay, and the world, continue to cherish his image and to bless his memory; and whether or not he obtain a splendid mausoleum, he will not require it, for he can (we heard him once quote the words in reference to Scott, as he only could quote them)

“A mightier monument command—  
The mountains of his native land.”

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## NO. IX.—HENRY ROGERS.

MR. ROGERS has only risen of late into universal reputation, although he had long ago deserved it. It has fared with him as with some others who had for many years enjoyed a dubious and struggling, although real and rising fame, till some signal hit, some “Song of the Shirt,” or “Eclipse of Faith,” introduced their names to millions who never heard of them before, and turned suddenly on their half-shadowed faces the broadest glare of fame. Thus, thousands upon thousands who had never heard of Hood’s “Progress of Cant,” or his “Comic Annuals,” so soon as they read the “Song of the Shirt,” inquired eagerly for him, and began to read his earlier works. And so, although literary men were aware of Mr. Rogers’ existence, and that he was an able contributor to the “Edin-

burgh Review," the general public knew not even his name till the "Eclipse of Faith" appeared, and till its great popularity excited a desire to become acquainted with his previous lucubrations. We met with the "Eclipse of Faith" at its first appearance, but have only newly risen from reading his collected articles, and propose to record our impressions while they are yet fresh and warm.

Henry Rogers, as a reviewer and writer, seems to think that he belongs to the school of Jeffrey and Macaulay, although possessed of more learning and imagination than either, of a higher moral sense and manlier power than the first, and of a freer diction and an easier vein of wit than the second; and the style of deference and idolatry he uses to them and to MacIntosh, might almost to his detractors appear either shameful from its hypocrisy, ludicrous from its affectation, or silly from the ignorance it discovers of his own claims and comparative merits. We defy any unprejudiced man to read the two volumes he has reprinted from the "Edinburgh Review," and not to feel that he has encountered, on the whole, the most accomplished, manliest, healthiest, and most Christian writer who ever adorned that celebrated periodical. If he has contributed to its pages no one article equal in brilliance to Jeffrey's papers on Alison and Swift, or to Macaulay's papers on Milton and Warren Hastings, his papers, taken *en masse*, are more natural, less labored, full of a richer and more recondite learning, and written in a more conversational, more vigorous, and more thoroughly English style. His thought, too, is of a profounder, and, at the same time, clearer cast. Jeffrey had the subtlety of the lawyer, rather than the depth of the philosopher. Macaulay thinks generally like an eloquent special pleader. Henry Rogers is a candid, powerful, and all-sided thinker, and one who has fed his thought by a culture as diversified as it is deep. He is a scholar, a mathematician, a philosopher, a philologist, a man of taste and *virtu*, a divine, and a wit, and if not absolutely a poet, yet he verges often on poetical conception, and his free and fervid eloquence often kindles into the fire of poetry.

Every one who has read the "Eclipse of Faith"—and who has not?—must remember how that remarkable work has collected all these varied powers and acquisitions into one burn-

ing focus, and must be ready to grant that, since Pascal, no knight has entered into the arena of religious controversy better equipped for fight, in strength of argument, in quickness of perception, in readiness and richness of resource, in command of temper, in pungency of wit, in a sarcasm which "burns froze" with the intense coolness of its severity, and in a species of Socratic dialogue which the son of Sophroniscus himself would have envied. But, as the public and the press generally have made up their minds upon all these points, as also on the merits of his admirable "Defence," and have hailed the author with acclamation, we prefer to take up his less known preceding efforts in the "Edinburgh Review," and to bring their merits before our readers, while, at the same time, we hope to find metal even more attractive in the great names and subjects on which we shall necessarily be led to touch, as, under Mr. Rogers' guidance, we pursue our way. We long, too, shall we say to break a lance here and there with so distinguished a champion, although assuredly it shall be all in honor, and not in hate.

From his political papers we abstain, and propose to confine ourselves to those on letters and philosophy. His first, and one of his most delightful papers, is on quaint old Thomas Fuller. It reminds us much of a brilliant paper on Sir Thomas Browne, contributed to the same journal, we understand, by Bulwer. Browne and Fuller were kindred spirits, being both poets among wits, and wits among poets. In Browne, however, imagination and serious thought rather preponderate, while wit unquestionably is, if not Fuller's principal faculty, the faculty he exercises most frequently, and with greatest delight. Some authors have wit and imagination in equal quantities, and it is their temperament which determines the question which of the two they shall specially use or cultivate. Thus, Butler of "Hudibras" had genuine imagination as well as prodigious wit, and, had he been a Puritan instead of a Cavalier, he might have indited noble serious poetry. Browne again, was of a pensive, although not sombre disposition, and hence his "Urn-burial" and "Religio Medici" are grave and imaginative, although not devoid of quaint, queer fancies and arabesque devices, which force you to smile. Fuller, on the other hand, was of a sanguine, happy, easy

temperament, a jolly Protestant father confessor, and this attracted him to the side of the laughing muse. Yet he abounds in quiet, beautiful touches both of poetry and pathos. Burke had, according to Mr. Rogers, little or no wit, although possessing a boundless profusion of imagery. To this we demur. His description of Lord Chatham's motley cabinet; his picture, in the "Regicide Peace," of the French ambassador in London; his description of those "who are emptied of their natural bowels, and stuffed with the blurred sheets of the 'Rights of Man;'" his famous comparison of the "gestation of the rabbit and the elephant;" his reply to the defence put in for Hastings, that the Hindoos had erected a temple to him ("He knew something of the Hindoo Mythology. They were in the habit of building temples not only to the gods of light and fertility, but to the demons of small-pox and murder, and he, for his part, had no objection that Mr. Hastings should be admitted into such a Pantheon")—these are a few out of many proofs that he often exercised that most brilliant species of wit which is impregnated with imagination. But the truth is, that Burke, an earnest, if not a sad-hearted man, was led by his excess of zeal to plead the causes in which he was interested in general by serious weapons, by the burning and barbed arrows of invective and imagination, rather than by the light-glancing missiles of wit and humor. Jeremy Taylor, with all his wealth of fancy, was restrained from wit partly by the subjects he was led through his clerical profession to treat, and partly from his temperament, which was quietly glad, rather than sanguine and mirthful. Some writers, again, we admit, and as Mr. Rogers repeatedly shows, vibrate between wit and the most melancholy seriousness of thought; the scale of their spirits, as it rises or sinks, either lifts them up to piercing laughter, or depresses them to thoughts too deep and sad for tears. It was so with Plato, with Pascal, with Hood, and is so, we suspect, with our author himself. Shakspeare, perhaps, alone of writers, while possessing wit and imaginative wisdom to the same prodigious degree, has managed to adjust them to each other, never allowing either the one or the other unduly to preponderate, but uniting them into that consummate whole, which has become the admiration, the wonder, and the despair of the world.

Mr. Rogers, alluding to the astonishing illustrative powers of Jeremy Taylor, Burke, and Fuller, says finely, "Most marvellous and enviable is that fecundity of fancy which can adorn whatever it touches, which can invest naked fact and dry reasoning with unlooked-for beauty, make flowerets bloom even on the brow of the precipice, and, when nothing better can be had, can turn the very substance of rock itself into moss and lichens. This faculty is incomparably the most important for the vivid and attractive *exhibition* of truth to the minds of men." We quote these sentences, not merely as being true, so far as they go, but because we want afterwards to mark a special inconsistency in regard to them which he commits in a subsequent paper.

We have long desired, and often expressed the desire, to see what we call *ideal geography*—i. e., the map of the earth run over in a poetic and imaginative way, the breath of genius passing over the dry bones of the names of places, and through the link of association between places and events, characters and scenery, causing them to live. Old Fuller gives us, if not a specimen of this, something far more amusing; he gives us a geography of joke, and even from the hallowed scenery of the Holy Land, he extracts, in all reverence, matter for inextinguishable merriment. What can be better in their way than the following? "Gilboa.—The mountain that David cursed, that neither rain nor dew should fall on it; but of late some English travellers climbing this mountain were well wetted, David not cursing it by a prophetic spirit, but in a poetic rapture. Edrei.—The city of Og, on whose giant-like proportions the rabbis have more giant-like lies. Pisgah.—Where Moses viewed the land; hereabouts the angel buried him, and also *buried the grave*, lest it should occasion idolatry." And so on he goes over each awful spot, chuckling in harmless and half-conscious glee, like a schoolboy through a *morning* churchyard, which, were it midnight, he would travel in haste, in terror, and with oft-reverted looks. It is no wish to detract from the dignity and consecration of these scenes that actuates him; it is nothing more nor less than his irresistible temperament, the boy-heart beating in his veins, and which is to beat on till death.

Down the halls of history, in like manner, Fuller skips



along, laughing as he goes; and even when he pauses to moralise or to weep, the pause is momentary, and the tear which had contended during its brief existence with a sly smile, is "forgot as soon as shed." His wit is often as withering as it is quaint, although it always performs its annihilating work without asperity, and by a single touch. Hear this on the Jesuits:—"Such is the charity of the Jesuits, that they never owe any man any ill-will—making present payment thereof." Or this on Machiavel, who had said, "that he who undertakes to write a history must be of no religion;" "if so, Machiavel himself was the best qualified of any in his age to write a history." Of modest women, who nevertheless dress themselves in questionable attire, he says, "I must confess some honest women may go thus, but no whit the honester for going thus. That ship may have Castor and Pollux for the sign, which notwithstanding has St. Paul for the lading." His irony, like good imagery, often becomes the shorthand of thought, and is worth a thousand arguments. The bare, bald style of the schoolmen he attributes to design, "lest any of the vermin of equivocation should hide themselves under the *nap* of their words." Some of our readers are probably smiling as they read this, and remember the dress of certain religious priests, not unlike the schoolmen in our day. After commenting on the old story of St. Dunstan and the Devil, he cries out, in a touch of irony seldom surpassed, "But away with all suspicions and queries. None need to doubt of the truth thereof, finding it on a sign painted in Fleet Street, near Temple Bar."

In these sparkles of wit and humor, there is, we notice, not a little consciousness. He says good things, and a quiet chuckle proclaims his knowledge that they are good. But his *best* things, the fine serious fancies, which at times cross his mind, cross it unconsciously, and drop out like pearls from the lips of a *blind* fairy, who sees not their lustre, and knows not their value. Fuller's deepest wisdom is the wisdom of children, and his finest eloquence is that which seems to cross over their spotless lips, like west winds over half-opened rose-buds—breathings of the Eternal Spirit, rather than utterances of their own souls. In this respect and in some others, he much resembled John Bunyan, to whom we wonder Rogers

has not compared him. Honest John, we verily believe, thought much more of his rhymes, prefixed to the second part of the "Pilgrim's Progress," and of the little puzzles and jokes he has scattered through the work, than of his divinely artless portraiture of scenery, passions, characters, and incidents in the course of the wondrous allegory. Mr. Rogers quotes a good many of Fuller's precious prattlings; but Lamb, we think, has selected some still finer, particularly his picture of the fate of John Wickliff's ashes. Similar touches of tender, quaint, profound, and unwitting sublimity, are found nearly as profusely sprinkled as his jests and clenches through his varied works, which are quite a quarry of sense, wit, truth, pedantry, learning, quiet poetry, ingenuity, and delightful nonsense. Rogers justly remarks, too, that notwithstanding all the rubbish and gossip which are found in Fuller's writings, he means to be truthful always; and that, with all his quaintness and pedantry, his style is purer and more legible than that of almost any writer of his age. It is less swelling and gorgeous than Browne's, but far easier and more idiomatic; less rich, but less diffuse, than Taylor's; less cumbered with learning than Burton's; and less involved, and less darkened with intermingling and crossing beams of light than that of Milton, whose poetry is written in the purest Grecian manner, whilst his English prose often resembles not Gothic, but Egyptian architecture, in its chaotic confusion and misproportioned magnificence.

Mr. Rogers' second paper is on Andrew Marvel, and contains a very interesting account of the life, estimate of the character, and criticism of the writings of this "Aristides-Butler," if we may, in the fashion of Mirabeau, coin a combination of words, which seems not inapt, to represent the virtues of that great patriot's life, and the wit and biting sarcasm of his manner of writing. He tells the old story of his father crossing the Humber with a female friend, and perishing in the waters; but omits the most striking part of the story, how the old man in leaving the shore, as the sky was scowling into storm, threw his staff back on the beach, and cried out, "Ho, for Heaven!" The tradition of this is at least still strong in Hull. Nothing after Marvel's integrity, and his quiet, keen, caustic wit, so astonishes us as the fact

that he never opened his lips in Parliament! He was "No-speech Marvel." He never got the length of Addison's "I conceive, I conceive, I conceive." There are no authentic accounts of even a "Hear, hear!" issuing from his lips. What an act of self-denial in that of bad measures and bad men! How his heart must sometimes have burned, and his lips quivered, and yet the severe spirit of self-control kept him silent! What a contrast to the infinite babblement of senators in modern days! And yet was not his silence very formidable? Did it not strike the Tories as the figure of the moveless Mordecai at the king's gate struck the guilty Haman? There, night after night, in front of the despots, sat the silent statue-like figure, bending not to their authority, unmovable by their threats, not to be melted by their caresses, not to be gained over by their bribes, perhaps with a quiet, stern sneer resting as though sculptured upon his lips, and, doubtless, they trembled more at this dumb defiance than at the loud-mouthed attacks and execrations of others; the more as, while others were sometimes absent *he* was always there, a moveless pillar of patriotism, a still libel of truth, for ever glaring on their fascinated and terror-stricken eyes. Can we wonder that they are very generally supposed to have removed him from their sight, in the only way possible in the circumstances, by giving him a premature and poisoned grave?

In his third paper, Rogers approaches a mightier and more eloquent, but not a firmer or more sincere spirit than Marvel—Martin Luther. Here he puts forth all his strength, and has, we think, very nobly vindicated both Luther's intellectual and moral character. Hallam (a writer whom Rogers greatly over-estimates, before whom he falls down with "awful reverence prone," from whom he ventures to differ with "a whispered breath and bated humbleness," which seem, considering his own calibre, very laughable, yet of whose incapacity as a literary critic, and especially as a judge of poetry, he seems to have a stifled suspicion, which comes out in the paper on Fuller, whom Hallam has slighted) has underrated Luther's talents, because, forsooth, his works are inferior to his reputation. Why, what was Luther's real work? It was the Reformation. What library of Atlas folios—ay, though Shakespeare had penned every line in it—could have been compared

to the rending of the shroud of the Christian church? As soon accuse an earthquake of not being so melodious in its tones as an organ, as demand artistic writings from Luther. His burning of the Pope's bull was, we think, and Mr. Rogers thinks with us, a very respectable review. His journey to Worms was as clever as most books of travel. His marriage with Catharine Bora was not a bad epithalamium. His rendering of the Bible into good German was nearly as great a work as the "Constitutional History." Some of those winged words which he uttered against the Pope and for Christ have been called "half-battles." He held the pen very well, too, but it was only with one of his hundred arms. His *works* were his actions. Every great book is an action; and the converse is also true—every great action is a book. Cromwell, Mr. Rogers says, very justly, cannot be judged by his speeches, nor Alexander. Neither, we add, could Cæsar by his "Commentaries," which, excellent as they are, develop only a small portion of the "foremost man of all this world;" nor could Frederick of Prussia by his French verses; nor could Nelson by his letters to Lady Hamilton; nor could even Hall, Chalmers, and Irving, by their orations and discourses. There is a very high, if not the highest order of men, who find literature too small a sheath for the broadsword of their genius. They come down and shrink up when they commence to write; but they make others write for them. Their deeds supply the material for ten thousand historians, novelists, and poets. We find Lord Holland, in his "Memoirs," sneering at Lord Nelson's talents, because his writings were careless and poor. Nelson did not pretend to be a writer or an orator; he pretended only to do what he did—to sweep the seas with his cannon, and be the greatest naval commander his country ever produced. Mungo Park and Ledyard were no great authors, but they were, what they wished to be, the most heroic of travellers. Danton never published a single page, but he was incomparably a greater man than Camille Desmoulins, who wrote thousands. Would it have added an inch to the colossal stature, or in any measure enhanced the lurid grandeur, of Satan, had Milton ascribed to him the invention, not of fire-arms, but of the printing-press, and made him the author of a few hundred satires

against Omnipotence? Channing in his *Essay on Napoleon*, has contributed to the circulation of this error. He gives there a decided preference to literary over other kinds of power. But would even he have compared Brougham or Daniel Webster to Washington? It seems to us that the very highest style of merit is when the powers of actions and authorship are combined in nearly equal proportions. They were so in Milton, who was as good a schoolmaster and secretary as he was an author. They were so in Bacon, who was an able, if not a just, chancellor and statesman, as well as the most richly-minded of men. Notwithstanding Mr. Rogers, they were so, we think, in Napoleon, whose bulletins and speeches, though often in false taste, were often as brilliant as his battles. They were so in Burke, who was a first-rate business man, and a good farmer, as well as a great orator, statesman, and writer. They were so in poor Burns, who used the plough as well as he used the pen. And they were so in Scott, who was an excellent Clerk of Session, and capital agriculturist and landlord, besides being the first of all fictionists, except Cervantes, who, by the way, fought bravely at Lepanto, as well as wrote "*Don Quixote*." Even in Luther's case, Mr. Hallam is proved by Rogers to be sufficiently harsh in his judgment. Luther's productions, occasional as most of them, and hastily written as all of them, were, are not the mediocre trash which Hallam insinuates them to be. If tried by the standard of that species of literature to which they all in reality belong, they will not be found wanting. They are all letters, the shorter or longer epistles of a man greatly engrossed during his days, and who at evening dashes off his careless, multifarious, but characteristic correspondence. Mark, too, everything he wrote was sent, and sent instantly, to the press. Who would like this done in his own case? What divine, writing each week his two sermons, would care about seeing them regularly printed the next day, and dispersed over all the country? Who, unless he were a man of gigantic genius and fame, would not be sunk under such a process, and run to utter seed? The fact that Luther did publish so much, and did nevertheless retain his reputation, proves, that, although much which he wrote must have been unworthy of his genius, yet, as a whole, his writings were characteristic of

his powers, and contributed to the working out of his purpose. They were addressed, Mr. Rogers justly says, chiefly to the people, and many of his strangest and strongest expressions were uttered on plan. His motto, like Danton's, was, "to dare—and to dare, and to dare." He felt that a timid reformer, like a timid revolutionist, is lost, and that a lofty tone, whether in bad or good taste, was essential to the success of his cause. Even as they are, his writings contain much "lion's marrow," stern truth, expressed in easy, homespun language, savage invective, richly deserved, and much of that noble scorn with which a brave honest man is ever fond of blowing away, as through snorting nostrils, those sophistries, evasions, and meannesses in controversy, which are beneath argument, baffle logical exposure, and which can only be reached by contempt. Add to all this, the traditionary reputation of his eloquence, and those burning coals from that great conflagration which have come down to us uncooled. For our parts, we had rather possess the renown of uttering some of these, than have written all Chillingworth's and Barrow's controversial works. Think of that sentence which he pronounced over the Bull as he burned it, surely one of the most sublime and terrible that ever came from human lips:—"As thou hast troubled and put to shame the Holy One of the Lord, so be thou troubled and consumed in eternal fires of hell;" or that at Worms—"Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise: God help me." Such sentences soar above all the reaches of rhetoric, of oratory, even of poetry, and rank in grandeur with the great naked abstractions of eternal truth. They thrill not the taste, nor the passions, nor the fancy, but the soul itself. And yet they were common on the lips of Luther the lion-hearted—the

"Solitary monk that shook the world."

Mr. Rogers, besides, culls several passages from his familiar epistles, which attain to lofty eloquence, and verge on the finest prose poetry. His occasional grossness, truculence, and personality, are undeniable; but they were partly the faults of his age, and sprung partly from the vehemence of his temperament, and the uncertainty of his position. He was, during a large section of his life, *at bay*, and if he had not employed every weapon in his power—his teeth, his horns, and his hoofs—to

defend himself, he had inevitably perished. We have not time to follow further Rogers' defence of Luther; suffice it to say, that he does full justice to Luther's honesty of purpose, his deep religious convictions, and his general wisdom and prudence of conduct. His errors were all of the blood and bodily temperament, and none of the spirit. Cajetan called him "a beast with deep-set eyes, and wonderful speculations in his head." If so, he was a noble savage—a king of beasts, and his roar roused Europe from its lethargy, dissolved the dark spell of spiritual slavery, and gave even to Popery all the vitality it has since exhibited. He resembled no class of men more than some of the ancient prophets of Israel. He was no Christian father of the first centuries, sitting cobwebbed among books, no evangelist even of the days of the apostles, going forth, meek and sandalled, with an olive branch in his hand; he reminds us rather, in all but austerity and abstinence, of the terrible Tishbite conflicting with Baal's prophets on Carmel, and fighting with fire the cause of that God who answereth by fire from heaven. But, unlike him, Luther came eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and has been reproached accordingly.

Mr. Rogers' next paper is on Leibnitz, whom he justly ranks with the most wonderful men of any age—and who, in that variety of faculty—that plethora of power—that all-sidedness which distinguished him, resembled a monster rather than a man. A sleepless soul, who often, for weeks together, contented himself with a few hours' slumber in his arm-chair, without ever discomposing his couch! A lonely spirit—with no tender family ties—but entirely devoted to inquiry and investigation, as though he had been one separated Eye, for ever prying into the universe! A wide eclectic catholic mind, intermeddling with all knowledge, and seeking, if possible, to bind mathematics, metaphysics, poetry, philology, all arts and sciences, into the unity of a coronet around his own brow! A soul of prodigious power as well as of ideal width; the inventor of a new and potent calculus—the father of geology—the originator of a new form of history, which others have since been seeking to fill up—and the author of a heroic, if not successful, effort to grapple with the question of questions—the problem of all ages—"Whence evil, and why per-

mitted in God's world?" A genius for whom earth seemed too narrow a sphere, and threescore-and-ten years too short a period, so much had he done ere death, and so much did there seem remaining for him to do—in truth, worthy of an antediluvian life! A mind swarming more than even that of Coleridge with seed-thoughts, the germs of entire encyclopædias in the future; and, if destitute of his magical power of poetic communication, possessing more originality, and more practical energy.\* A man who read everything and forgot nothing—a living dictionary of all the knowledge which had been accumulated by man—and a living prophecy of all that was yet to be acquired—a universal preface to a universal volume—"a gigantic genius born to grapple with whole libraries." Such is Leibnitz known by all scholars to have been. His two positive achievements, however, the two pillars on which he leans his Samson-like strength, are the differential "Calculus," and the "Theodicée." Mr. Rogers' remarks on both these are extremely good. In the vexed question as to the origination of the "Calculus," between Leibnitz and Newton he seems perfectly impartial; and, while eagerly maintaining Newton's originality, he defends Leibnitz with no less strength, from the charge of surreptitious plagiarism from Newton. Both were too rich to require to steal from one another. In "Theodicée," Leibnitz undertook the most daring task ever undertaken by thinker, that of explaining the origin of evil by demonstrating its necessity. That he failed in this, Voltaire has proved, after his manner, in "Candide," the wittiest and wickedest of his works, and Rogers, in a very different spirit and style, has demonstrated here. Indeed, the inevitable eye of common sense sees at a glance that a notion of this earth being the best of all possible worlds is absurd and blasphemous. This system of things falls far below man's ideal, and how can it come up to God's? The shadows resting upon its past and present aspect are so deep, numerous, and terrible, that nothing

\* Since writing this, we have lighted on a paper by De Quincey, in the "London Magazine," containing an elaborate comparison—coincident with our views—between Leibnitz and Coleridge, "who both united minds distinguished by variety and compass of power to a bodily constitution resembling that of horses. They were centaurs; heroic intellects, with brutal capacities of body."



hitherto, but, first, simple, child-like faith; but, secondly, the prospect of a better time at hand; and, thirdly, the discoveries of Jesus Christ, can convince us that they do not spring either from malignity of intention or weakness of power. The time has not yet come for a true solution of this surpassing problem; which, moreover, though it were given, would not probably find the world ripe for receiving it. We are inclined, in opposition to Mr. Rogers, to suppose that it shall yet be solved; but to look for its solution in a very different direction from the ground taken, whether by Leibnitz, by Bailey of "Festus," or by the hundred other speculators upon the mysterious theme. Meanwhile, we may, we think, rest firmly upon these convictions—first, that evil exists—is a reality, not a negation or a sham; secondly, that it is not God's; and that, thirdly, it shall yet cease, on earth at least, to be man's. All attempts to go further than this have failed; and failed, we think, from a desire to find a *harmony* and a *unity* where no such things are possible or conceivable.

One is tempted to draw a kind of Plutarchian parallel between Leibnitz and Newton—so illustrious in their respective spheres—and whose contest with one another "in their courses" forms such a painful, yet instructive, incident in the history of science. Newton was more the man of patient plodding industry; Leibnitz the man of restless genius. Newton's devotion was limited to science and theology; Leibnitz pushed his impetuous way into every department of science, literature, philosophy, and theology; and left traces of his power even in those regions he was not able fully to subdue. Newton studied principally the laws of matter; Leibnitz was ambitious to know these chiefly, that he might reconcile, if not identify, them with the laws of mind. Newton was a theorist—but the most practical of theorists. Leibnitz was the most theoretical of practical thinkers. Newton was the least empirical of all philosophers; Leibnitz one of the most so. Newton shunned all speculation and conjecture which were not forced upon him; Leibnitz revelled in these at all times and all subjects. Newton was rather timid than otherwise, he groped his way like a blind Atlas, while stepping from world to world; Leibnitz *saw* it as he sailed along in supreme dominion on the wings of his intellectual imagina-

tion. Newton was a deeply humble—Leibnitz, a dauntless and daring thinker. Newton *did* his full measure of work, and suggested little more that *he* was likely to do; Leibnitz, to the very close of his life, teemed with promise. The one was a finished, the other a fragmentary production of larger size. The one was a rounded planet, with its corner-stones all complete, and its mechanisms all moving smoothly and harmoniously forward; the other, a star in its nebulous mist, and with all its vast possibilities before it. Newton was awestruck, by the great and dreadful sea of suns in which he swam, into a mute worshipper of the Maker; Leibnitz sought rather to be his eloquent advocate—

“To assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to man.”

To Pascal, Mr. Rogers proceeds with a peculiar intensity of fellow-feeling. He has himself, sometimes, been compared to Pascal, both in the mirthful and the pensive attributes of his genius. Certainly, his sympathies with him are more thorough and brotherly than with any other of his poetico-metaphysico-theosophical heroes. He that loves most, it has often been said, understands best. And this paper of Rogers sounds the very soul of Pascal. Indeed, that presents fewer difficulties than you might at first suppose. Pascal, with his almost superhuman genius, was the least subtle, and most transparent of men. In wisdom almost an angel, he was in simplicity a child. His single-mindedness was only inferior to, nay, seemed a part of, his sublimity. He was from the beginning, and continued to the end, an inspired infant. A certain dash of charlatanerie distinguishes Leibnitz, as it does all those monsters of power. The very fact that they can do so much tempts them to pretend to do, and to be what they cannot and are not. Possessed of vast knowledge, they affect the airs of omniscience. Thus Leibnitz, in the universal language he sought to construct, in his “swift-going carriages,” in his “Pre-established Harmony,” and in his “Monads,” seems seeking to *stand behind* the Almighty, to overlook, direct, or anticipate him at his work. Pascal was not a monster; he was a man—nay, a child; although a man of profoundest sagacity, and a child of transcendent genius. Chil-

dren feel far more than men the mysteries of being, although the gaiety and light-heartedness of their period of life prevent the feeling from oppressing their souls. Who can answer the questions or resolve the doubts of infancy? We remember a dear child, who was taken away to Abraham's bosom at nine years of age, saying that her two grand difficulties were, "Who made God? and How did sin come into the world?" These—an uncaused cause, and an originated evil—are the great difficulties of all thinking men, on whom they press more or less hardly in proportion to their calibre and temperament. Pascal, adding to immense genius a child-like tenderness of heart and purity of conduct, was peculiarly liable to the tremendous doubts and fears forced on us all by the phenomena of man and the universe. He felt them, at once, with all the freshness of infancy and with all the force of a melancholy manhood. He had in vain tried to solve them. He had asked these dreadful questions at all sciences and philosophies, and got no reply. He had carried them up to heights of speculation, where angels bashful look, and down into depths of reflection, such as few minds but his own have ever sounded, and all was dumb. Height and depth had said, "Not in us." The universe of stars was cold, dead, and tongueless. He felt terrified at, not instructed by it. He said, "*The eternal silence of these infinite spaces affrights me.*" He had turned for a solution from the mysterious materialism of the heavenly bodies to man, and had found in him his doubts driven to contradiction and despair; he seemed a puzzle so perplexed, a chaos so disorderly. He was thus rapidly approaching the gulf of universal scepticism, and was about to drop in like a child over a precipice, when, hark! he heard a voice behind him; and turning round, saw Christianity like a mother following her son to seek and to save him from the catastrophe. Her beauty, her mildness of deportment, her strange yet regal aspect, and the gentleness of those accents of an unknown land, which drop like honey from her lips, convince him that she is divine, and that she is his mother, even before he has heard or understood her message. He loves and believes her before he knows that she is worthy of all credence and all love. And when, afterwards he learns in some measure to understand her far foreign speech, he perceives her

still more certainly to be a messenger from heaven. She does not, indeed, remove all his perplexities; she allows the deep shadows to rest still on the edge of the horizon, and the precipices to yawn on; but she creates a little space of intense clearness around her child, and she bridges the remoter gloom with the rainbow of hope. She does not completely satisfy, but she soothes his mind, saying to him as he kneels before her, and as she blesses her noble son, "Remain on him, ye rainbowed clouds, ye gilded doubts, by your pressure purify him still more, and prepare him for higher work, deeper thought, and clearer revelation; teach him the littleness of man and the greatness of God, the insignificance of man's life on earth and the grandeur of his future destiny, and impress him with this word of the Book above all its words, 'That which thou knowest not now, thou shalt hereafter *know*, if thou wilt humble thyself, and become as a little child.' " Thus we express in parable the healthier portion of Pascal's history. That latterly the clouds returned after the rain, that the wide rainbow faded into a dim segment, and that his mother's face shone on him through a haze of uncertainty and tears, seems certain; but this we are disposed to account for greatly from physical causes. By studying too hard, and neglecting his bodily constitution, he became morbid to a degree which amounted, we think, to semi-mania. In this sad state, the more melancholy, because attended by the full possession of his intellectual powers, his most dismal doubts came back at times, his most cherished convictions shook as with palsy, the craving originally created by his mathematical studies for demonstrative evidence on all subjects, became diseasedly strong, and nothing but piety and prayer saved him from shoreless and bottomless scepticism. Indeed, his great unfinished work on the evidences of Christianity, seems to have been intended to convince himself quite as much as to convince others. But he has long ago passed out of this mysterious world; and now, we trust, sees "light in God's light clearly." If his doubts were of an order so large and deep, that they did not "go out even to prayer and fasting," he was honest in them; they did not spring either from selfishness of life or pride of intellect; and along with some of the child's doubts, the child's heart remained in him to the last.

His "Thoughts"—what can be said adequately of those magnificent fragments? They are rather subjects *for* thoughts than for words. They remind us of *aërolites*, the floating fractions of a glorious world. Some of them, to use an expression applied to Johnson's sayings, "have been rolled and polished in his great mind like pebbles in the ocean." He has wrought them, and finished them, as carefully as if each thought were a book. Others of them are slighter in thinking and more careless in style. But, as a whole, the collection forms one of the profoundest and most living of works. The "Thoughts" are seed-pearl, and on some of them volumes might be, and have been, written. We specially admire those which reflect the steadfast but gentle gloom of the author's habit of mind, the long tender twilight, not without its stars and gleams of coming day, which shadowed his genius, and softened always his grandeur into pathos. He is very far from being a splenetic or misanthropic spirit. Nothing personal is ever allowed either to shade or to brighten the tissue of his meditations. He stands a passionless spirit, as though he were disembodied, and had forgot his own name and identity, on the shore which divides the world of man from the immensity of God, and he pauses and ponders, wonders and worships there. He sees the vanity and weakness of all attempts which have hitherto been made to explain the difficulties and reconcile the contradictions of our present system. Yet, without any evidence—for all quasi-evidence melts in a moment before his searching eye into nothing—he believes it to be connected with one Infinite Mind; and this springs in him, not as Cousin pretends, from a determination blindly to believe, but from a whisper in his own soul, which tells him warmly to love. But it is not, after all, the matter in the universe which he regards with affection, it is the God who is passing through it, and lending it the glory of his presence. Mere matter he tramples on and despises. It is just so much brute light and heat. He does not, and cannot, believe that the throne of God and of the Lamb is made of the same materials, only a little sublimated, as yonder dunghill or the crest of yonder serpent. He is an intense spiritualist. He cries out to this proud process of developing matter, this wondrous Something sweltering out

suns in its progress—"Thou mayest do thy pleasure on me, thou mayest crush me, but I will *know* that thou art crushing me, whilst thou shalt crush blindly. I should be conscious of the defeat. Thou shouldst not be conscious of the victory." Bold, certainly, was the challenge of this little piece of inspired humanity, this frail, slender invalid, but divinely gifted man, to the enormous mass of uninspired and uninstinctive matter amid which he lived. He did not believe in law, life, or blind mechanism, as the all-in-all of the system of things. He believed rather in Tennyson's Second Voice—

"A little whisper breathing low,  
I may not speak of what I know."

He *felt*, without being able to *prove*, that God was in this place.

Pascal's result of thought was very much the same as John Foster's, although the process by which he reached it was different. Pascal had turned, so to speak, the tub of matter upside down, and found it empty. Foster had simply touched its sides, and heard the ring which proclaimed that there was nothing within. The one reached at once, and by intuition, what was to the other the terminus of a thousand lengthened intellectual researches. Both had lost all hope in scientific discoveries and metaphysical speculations, as likely to bring us a step nearer to the Father of Spirits, and were cast, therefore, as the orphans of Nature, upon the mercies and blessed discoveries of the Divine Word. Both, however, felt that *THAT*, too, has only very partially revealed Truth, that the Bible itself is a "glass in which we see darkly," and that the key of the Mysteries of Man and the Universe is as yet in the keeping of Death. Both, particularly Foster, expected too much, as it appears to us, from the *instant* transition of the soul from this to another world. Both clothed their gloomy thoughts, thoughts "charged with a thunder" which was never fully evolved; in the highest eloquence which pensive thought can produce when wedded to poetry. But, while Pascal's eloquence is of a grave, severe, monumental cast, Foster's is expressed in richer imagery, and is edged by a border of fiercer sarcasm; for, although the author of the "Thoughts" was the author of the "Provincial Letters," and had wit and sar-

casm at will, they are generally free from bitterness, and are rarely allowed to intermingle with his serious meditations. (In these remarks, we refer to Foster's posthumous journal rather than to his essays.) Both felt that Christianity was yet in bud, and looked forward with fond yet trembling anticipation to the coming of a "new and most mighty dispensation," when it shall, under a warmer and nearer sun, expand into a tree, the leaves of which shall be for the healing of the nations, and the shade of which shall be heaven begun on earth. We must say that we look on the religion of such men, clinging each to his plank amid the weltering wilderness of waves, and looking up for the coming of the day—a religion so deep-rooted, so sad as regards the past and present, so sanguine in reference to the future, so doubtful of man and human means, so firm in its trust on divine power and promise, with far more interest and sympathy than on that commonplace, bustling Christianity which abounds, with its stereotyped arguments, its cherished bigotry and narrowness, its shallow and silly gladness, its Goody Twoshoes benevolence, its belief in well-oiled machineries, Evangelical Alliances, Exeter Hall cheers, the power of money, and the voice of multitudes. True religion implies struggle, doubt, sorrow, and these are indeed the main constituents of its grandeur. It is just the sigh of a true and holy heart for a better and brighter sphere. In the case of Pascal and Foster, this sigh becomes audible to the whole earth, and is re-echoed through all future ages.

It was during the brief sunshine hour of his life, that Pascal wrote his "Provincial Letters." On these, Rogers dilates with much liveliness and power. He can meet his author at all points, and is equally at home when taking a brisk morning walk with him along a breezy summit, the echoes repeating their shouts of joyous laughter; and when pacing at midnight the shades of a gloomy forest discolored by a waning moon, which seems listening to catch their whispers as they talk of death, evil, and eternity. The "Provincial Letters" are, on the whole, the most brilliant collection of controversial letters extant. They have not the rounded finish, the concentration, the red-hot touches of sarcasm, and the brief and occasional bursts of invective darkening into sublimity, which distinguish the letters of Junius. Nor have they the profound *asides* of

reflection, or the impatient power of passion, or the masses of poetical imagery, to be found in Burke's "Letter to a Noble Lord," and "Letters on a Regicide Peace;" but they excel these and all epistolary writings in dexterity of argument, in power of irony, in light, hurrying, scorching satire, a "fire running along the ground," in grace of motion, and in Attic salt and Attic elegance of style. He has held up his enemies to immortal scorn, and painted them in the most contemptible and ludicrous attitudes—on a Grecian urn. He has preserved those wasps and flies in the richest amber. Has he not honored too much those wretched sophisters, by destroying them with the golden shafts of Apollo? Had not the broad hoof of Pan, or the club of Hercules, been a more appropriate weapon for crushing and mangling them into mire? But, had he employed coarser weapons, although equally effective in destroying his enemies, he had gained less glory for himself. As it is, he has founded one of his best claims to immortality upon the slaughter of these despicabilities, like the knights of old, who won their laurels in clearing the forests from wild swine and similar brutes. And, be it remembered, that, though the Jesuits individually were for the most part contemptible, their system was a very formidable one, and required the whole strength of a master hand to expose it.

We close this short notice of Pascal with rather melancholy emotions. A man so gifted in the prodigality of heaven, and so short-lived (just thirty-nine at his death!) A man so pure and good, and in the end of his days so miserable! A sun so bright, and that set amid such heavy clouds! A genius so strong and so well-furnished, and yet the slave in many things of a despicable superstition! One qualified above his fellows to have extended the boundaries of human thought, and to have led the world on in wisdom and goodness, and yet who did so little, and died believing that nothing was worth being done! One of the greatest thinkers and finest writers in the world, and yet despising fame, and at last loathing all literature except the Lamb's Book of Life! Able to pass from the Dan to the Beersheba of universal knowledge, and forced to exclaim at the end of the journey, "All is barren!" Was he in this mad or wise—right or wrong? We think the truth lies between. He was right and wise in thinking that



man can do little at the most, know little at the clearest, and must be imperfect at the best; but he was wrong and mad in not attempting to know, to do, and to be the little within his own power, as well as in not urging his fellow-men to know, be, and do the less within theirs. Like the wagoner in fable, and Foster in reality, while calling on Hercules to come down from the cloud, he neglected to set his shoulder to the wheel. He should have done both, and thus, if he had not expedited the grand purpose of progress so much as he wished, he would at least have delivered his own soul, secured a deeper peace in his heart, and in working more, would have suffered less. While Prometheus *was* chained to his rock, Pascal voluntarily chained himself to his by the chain of an iron-spiked girdle, and there mused sublime musings, and uttered melodious groans, till merciful Death released him. He was one of the very few Frenchmen who have combined imagination and reverence, with fancy, intellect, and wit.

In his next paper, Mr. Rogers approaches another noble and congenial theme—Plato, and his master Socrates. It is a Greek meeting a Greek, and the tug of war, of course, comes—a generous competition of kindred genius. We have read scores of critiques—by Landor, by Shelley, by Bulwer, by Sir Daniel Sandford, by Emerson and others, on these redoubted heroes of the Grecian philosophy; but we forget if any of them excel this of our author in clearness of statement, discrimination, sympathy with the period, and appreciation of the merits of the two magnificent men. Old Socrates, with his ugly face, his snub nose, his strong head for standing liquor, his restless habits, his subtle irony, the inimitable dialogue on which he made his enemies to slide down as on a mountain-side of ice, from the heights of self-consequent security to the depths of defeat and exposure; his sublime common sense; his subtle, yet homely dialectics, opening up mines of gold by the wayside, and getting the gods to sit on the roof of the house; his keen raillery, his power of sophisticating sophists, and his profound knowledge of his own necience, is admirably daguerreotyped. With equal power, the touches lent to him by the genius of his disciple are discriminated from the native traits. Plato, to say the least of it, has *colored* the calotype of Socrates with the tints of his own fine

and fiery imagination ; or he has acted as a painter, when he puts a favorite picture in the softest and richest light ; or as a poet, when he visits a beautiful scene by moonlight ; or as a lover, when he gently lifts up the image of his mistress across the line which separated it from perfection. We often hear of people *throwing* themselves into such and such a subject ; there is another process still—that of *adding* one's-self to such and such a character. You see a person, who, added to yourself, would make, you think, a glorious being, and you proceed to idealise accordingly ; you stand on his head, and out-tower the tallest ; you club your brains with his, and are wiser than the wisest ; you add the heat of your heart to his, and produce a very furnace of love. Thus Solomon might have written David's romantic history, and given the latter, in addition to his courage, sincerity and lyric genius, his own voluptuous fancy and profound acquirements. All biographers, indeed, possessed of any strong individuality themselves, act very much in this way when narrating the lives of kindred spirits. And, certainly, it was thus that Plato dealt with Socrates. The Platonic Socrates is a splendid composite, including the sagacity, strength, theological acumen, and grand modesty, as of the statue of a kneeling god, which distinguished the master ; and the philosophic subtlety, the high imagination, the flowing diction, and the exquisite refinement of the disciple. Yet, even Socrates in the picture of Plato is not, for a moment, to be compared to the Carpenter of Nazareth, as represented by his biographer, John the Fisherman of Galilee. We shall quote, by and by, the fine passage in which Mr. Rogers draws the comparison between the two.

To Plato as a thinker and writer ample justice is done. Perhaps too little is said against that slip-slop which in his writings so often mingles with the sublimity. They are often, verily, strange symposia which he describes—a kind of *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, swarming here with bacchanalian babblement, and there with sentences and sayings which might have been washed down with nectar. They are intensely typical of the ancient Grecian mind, of its heights and its depths, its unnatural vices and its lofty ideals of art. In their conception of beauty, the Greeks approximated the ideal, but their views of God and of man were exceedingly imperfect. Hence their

disgusting vices; hence their sacrifice of everything to the purposes of art; hence the sensuality of their genius when compared to that of the Gothic nations; hence the resistance offered by their philosophers to Christianity, which appeared to them "foolishness;" hence Platonism, the highest effort of their philosophy, seems less indigenous to Greece than Aristotelianism, and resembles an exotic transplanted from Egypt or Palestine. Except in Plato and Æschylus, there is little approach in the productions of the Greek genius to moral sublimity or to a true religious feeling. Among the prose writers of Greece, Aristotle and Demosthenes more truly reflected the character of the national mind than Plato. They were exceedingly ingenious and artistic, the one in his criticism, and the other in his oratory, but neither was capable of the lowest flights of Plato's magnificent prose-poetry. Aristotle was, as Macaulay calls him, "the acutest of human beings;" but it was a cold, needle-eyed acuteness. As a critic, his great merit lay in deducing the principles of the epic from the perfect example set by Homer, like a theologian forming a perfect system of morality from the life of Christ; but this, though a useful process, and one requiring much talent, is not of the highest order even of intellectual achievements, and has nothing at all of the creative in it. It is but the work of an index-maker on a somewhat larger scale. Demosthenes, Mr. Rogers, with Lord Brougham and most other critics, vastly over-rates. His speeches, as delivered by himself, must have been overwhelming in their immediate effect, but really constitute, when read, morsels as dry and sapless as we ever tried to swallow. They are destitute of that "action, action, action," on which he laid so much stress, and having lost it, they have lost nearly all. They have a good deal of clear pithy statement, and some striking questions and apostrophes, but have no imagery, no depth of thought, no grasp, no grandeur, no genius. Lord Brougham's speeches we have called "law-papers on fire;" the speeches of Demosthenes are law-papers with much less fire. To get at their merit we must apply the well-known rule of Charles James Fox. He used to ask if such and such a speech read well; "if it did, it was a bad speech, if it did not it was probably good." On this principle

the orations of Demosthenes must be the best in the world, since they are about the dullest reading in it.

Far otherwise with the golden sentences of Plato. Dry argument, half hot with passion, is all Demosthenes can furnish. Plato

"Has gifts in their most splendid variety and most harmonious combinations; rich alike in powers of invention and acquisition; equally massive and light; vigorous and muscular, yet pliable and versatile; master at once of thought and expression, in which originality and subtlety of intellect are surrounded by all the ministering aids of imagination, wit, humor, and eloquence, and the structure of his mind resembles some masterpiece of classic architecture, in which the marble columns rise from their deep foundation exquisitely fashioned and proportioned, surmounted with elaborate and ornamented capitals, and supporting an entablature inscribed with all forms of the beautiful.

"Plato's style," Mr. Rogers proceeds, "is unrivalled; he wielded at will all the resources of the most copious, flexible, and varied instrument of thought through which the mind of man has ever yet breathed the music of eloquence. Not less severely simple and refined when he pleases than Pascal, between whom and Plato many resemblances existed—as in beauty of intellect, in the delicacy of their wit, in aptitude for abstract science, and in moral wisdom; the Grecian philosopher is capable of assuming every mood of thought, and of adopting the tone, imagery, and diction appropriate to each. Like Pascal, he can be by turns profound, sublime, pathetic, sarcastic, playful; but with a far more absolute command over all the varieties of manner and style. He could pass, by the most easy and rapid transitions, from the majestic eloquence which made the Greeks say, that if Jupiter had spoken the language of mortals he would have spoken in that of Plato, to that homely style of illustration and those highly idiomatic modes of expression which mark the colloquial manner of his Socrates, and which, as Alcibiades in his eulogium observes, might induce a stranger to say that the talk of the sage was all about shoemakers and tailors, carpenters and braziers."—p. 334.

We promised to quote also his closing paragraph. Here it

is, worthy in every respect of the author of the "Eclipse of Faith," and equal to its best passages:—

"We certainly hold the entire dramatic projection and representation of Socrates in the pages of Plato, to be one of the most wonderful efforts of the human mind. In studying him, it is impossible that his character as a teacher of ethics, and and his life-like mode of representation, should not suggest to us *another character* yet more wonderfully depicted, and by the same most difficult of all methods—that of dramatic evolution by discourse and action; of one who taught a still purer, sublimer, and more consistent ethics, pervaded by a more intense spirit of humanity, of one whose love for our race was infinitely deeper and more tender, who stands perfectly free from those foibles which history attributes to the real Socrates, and from that too Protean facility of manners which, though designed by Plato as a compliment to the philosophic flexibility of *his* character of Socrates, really so far assimilated him with mere vulgar humanity; of one, too, whose sublime and original character is not only exhibited with the most wonderful dramatic skill, but in a style as unique as the character it embodies—a style of simple majesty, which, unlike that of Plato, is capable of being readily translated into every language under heaven; of one whose life was the embodiment of that virtue which Plato affirmed would entrance all hearts if seen, and whose death throws the prison-scenes of the 'Phædo' utterly into the shade; of one, lastly, whose picture has arrested the admiring gaze of many who have believed it to be only a picture. Now, if we feel that the portraiture of Socrates in the pages of Plato involved the very highest exercise of the highest dramatic genius, and that the cause was no more than commensurate with the effect, it is a question which may well occupy the attention of a *philosopher*, how it came to pass that in one of the obscurest periods of the history of an obscure people, in the dregs of their literature and the lowest depths of superstitious dotage, so sublime a conception should have been so sublimely exhibited; how it was that the noblest truths found an oracle in the lips of the grossest ignorance, and the maxims of universal charity advocates in the hearts of the most selfish of narrow-minded bigots; in a word, who could be the more than Plato, (or rather

the many each more than Plato), who drew that radiant portrait, of which it may be truly said, 'that a far greater than Socrates is here?'—pp. 366, 377.

Passing over a very ingenious paper on the "Structure of the English Language," we come to one on the "British Pulpit," some of the statements in which are weighty and powerful, but some of which we are compelled to controvert. Mr. Rogers begins by deploring the want of eloquence and of effect in the modern pulpit. There is, undoubtedly, too much reason for this complaint, although we think that in the present day it is not so much eloquence that men *desiderate* in preaching, as real instruction, living energy, and wide variety of thought and illustration. Mr. Rogers says very little about the *substance* of sermons, and, in what he does say, seems to incline to that principle of strait-lacing which we thought had been nearly exploded. No doubt every preacher should preach the main doctrines of the gospel, but, if he confine himself exclusively to these, he will limit his own sphere of power and influence. Why should he not preach the great general moralities as well? Why should he not tell, upon occasion, great political, metaphysical, and literary truths to his people, turning them, as they are so susceptible of being turned, to religious account? It will not do to tell us that preachers must follow the Apostles in every respect. Christ alone was a perfect model, and how easy and diversified his discourses! He had seldom any *text*. He spake of subjects as diverse from each other as are the deserts of Galilee from the streets of Jerusalem; the summit of Tabor from the tower of Siloam; the cedar of Lebanon from the hyssop springing out of the wall. He touched the political affairs of Judea, the passing incidents of the day, the transient controversies and heartburnings of the Jewish sects, with a finger as firm and as luminous as he did the principles of morality and of religion. Hence, in part, the superiority and the success of his teaching. It was a wide and yet not an indefinite and baseless thing. It swept the circumference of nature and of man, and then radiated on the cross as on a centre. It gathered an immense procession of things, thoughts, and feelings, and led them through Jerusalem and along the foot of Calvary. It bent all beings and subjects into its grand purpose,

transfiguring them as they stooped before it. It was this catholic *eclectic* feature in Christ's teaching which, while it made many cry out, "Never man spake like this man," has created also some certain misconceptions of its character. Many think that he was at bottom nothing more than a Pantheistic poet, because he shed on all objects—on the lilies of the valley, the salt of the sea, the thorns of the wilderness, the trees of the field, the rocks of the mountain, and the sands of the sea-shore—that strange and glorious light which he brought with him to earth, and poured around him as from the wide wings of an angel, as from the all-beautifying beams of dawn.

We think that, if Christ's teaching be taken as the test and pattern, Mr. Rogers limits the range of preaching too much when he says his principal characteristics should be "practical reasoning and strong emotion." Preaching is not a mere hortatory matter. Sermons are the better of applications, but they should not be *all* application. Ministers should remember to address mankind and their audiences as a whole, and should seek here to instruct their judgments, and there to charm their imagination; here to allure, and there to alarm; here to calm, and there to arouse; here to reason away their doubts and prejudices, and there to awaken their emotions. Mr. Rogers disapproves of discussing first principles in the pulpit, and says that "the Atheist and Deist are rarely found in Christian congregations." We wish we could believe this. If there are no avowed Atheists or Deists in our churches, there are, we fear, many whose minds are grievously unsettled and at sea on such subjects, and shall they be altogether neglected in the daily ministrations? Of what use to speak to them of justification by faith, who think there is nothing to be believed, or of the *New Birth*, who do not believe in the *Old*, but deem themselves fatherless children in a forsaken world? We think him decidedly too severe, also, in his condemnation of the use of scientific and literary language in the pulpit. Pedantry, indeed, and darkening counsel by technical language, we abhor, but elegant and scholarly diction may be combined with simplicity and clearness, and has a tendency to elevate the minds and refine the tastes of those who listen to it. It is of very little use coming down, as it is called, to

men's level; now-a-days, if you do so, you will get nothing but contempt for your pains—you cannot, indeed, be too intelligible, but you may be so while using the loftiest imagery and language. Chalmers never “came down to men's level,” and yet his discourses were understood and felt by the humblest of his audience, when by the energy of his genius and the power of his sympathies he lifted them *up to his*.

Mr. Rogers thinks that all preachers aspiring to power and usefulness will “abhor the ornate and the florid,” and yet it is remarkable that the most powerful and the most useful, too, of preachers have been the most ornate and florid. Who more ornate than Isaiah? Who spoke more in figures and parables than Jesus? Chrysostom, of the “golden mouth,” belonged to the same school. South sneers at Jeremy Taylor, and Rogers very unworthily re-echoes the sneer; but what comparison between South the sneerer, and Taylor, the sneered at, in genius or in genuine power and popularity? To how many a cultivated mind has Jeremy Taylor made religion attractive and dear, which had hated and despised it before? Who more florid than Isaac Taylor, and what writer of this century has done more to recommend Christianity to certain classes of the community? He, to be sure, is no preacher, but who have been or are the most popular and most powerful preachers of the age? Chalmers, Irving, Melville, Hall; and amid their many diversities in point of intellect, opinion, and style, they agree in this—that they all abound in figurative language and poetical imagery. And if John Foster failed in preaching, it was certainly not from want of imagination, which formed, indeed, the staple of all his best discourses. Mr. Rogers, to be sure, permits a “moderate use of the imagination;” but, strange to say, it is the men who have made a *large* and *lavish* use of it in preaching who have most triumphantly succeeded. Of course they have all made their imagination subservient to a high purpose; but we demur to his statement that no preacher should ever employ his imagination merely to delight us. He should not, indeed, become constantly the minister of delight; but he should, and must occasionally, in gratifying himself with his own fine fancies, give an innocent and intense gratification to others, and having thus delighted his audience, mere gratitude on



their part will prepare them for listening with more attention and interest to his solemn appeals at the close. He says that the splendid description in the "Antiquary" of a sunset would be altogether out of place in the narrative by a naval historian of two fleets separated on the eve of engagement by a storm, or in any serious narrative or speech, forgetting that the "Antiquary" professes to be a serious narrative, and that Burke, in his speeches and essays, has often interposed in critical points of narration descriptions quite as long and as magnificent, which, nevertheless, so far from exciting laughter, produce the profoundest impression, blending, as they do, the energies and effects of fiction and poetry with those of prose and fact.

That severely simple and *agonistic* style, which Mr. Rogers recommends so strongly, has been seldom practised in Britain, except in the case of Baxter, with transcendent effect. At all events, the *writings* of those who have followed it, have not had a tithe of the influence which more genial and fanciful authors have exerted. For one who reads South, ten thousand revel in Jeremy Taylor. Howe, a very imaginative and rather diffuse writer, has supplanted Baxter in general estimation. In Scotland, while the dry sermons of Ebenezer Erskine are neglected, the lively and fanciful writings of his brother Ralph have still a considerable share of popularity. The works of Chalmers and Cumming, destined as both are in due time to oblivion, are preserved in their present life by what in the first is real, and in the second a semblance of imagination. Of the admirable writings of Dr. Harris, and of Hamilton, we need not speak. Latimer, South, and Baxter, whom Rogers ranks so highly, are not *classics*. Even Jonathan Edwards and Butler, with all their colossal talent, are now little read on account of their want of imagination. The same vital deficiency has doomed the sermons of Tillotson, Atterbury, Sherlock, and Clarke. Indeed, in order to refute Mr. Rogers, we have only to recur to his own words, quoted above—"this faculty—fancy, namely—is incomparably the most important for the vivid and attractive exhibition of truth to the minds of men." It follows, that, since the great object of preaching is to exhibit truth to the minds of men, fancy is the faculty most needful to the preacher, and that the

want of it is the most fatal of deficiencies. In fact, although a few preachers have, through the agonistic methods, by pure energy and passion, produced great effects, these have been confined chiefly to their spoken speech, have not been transferred to their published writings, and have speedily died away. It is the same in other kinds of oratory. Fox's eloquence, which studied only immediate effect, perished with him, and Pitt's likewise. Burke's, being at once highly imaginative and profoundly wise, lives, and must live for ever.

We have not room to enlarge on some other points in the paper. We think Mr. Rogers lays far too much stress on the *time* a preacher should take in composing his sermons. Those preachers who spend all the week in finical polishing of periods, and intense elaboration of paragraphs, are not the most efficient or esteemed. A well-furnished mind, animated by enthusiasm, will throw forth in a few hours a sermon incomparably superior, in force, freshness, and energy, to those discourses which are slowly and toilsomely built up. It may be different sometimes with sermons which are meant for publication. Yet some of the finest published sermons in literature have been written at a heat.

From the entire second volume of these admirable essays, we must abstain. "Reason and Faith" would itself justify a long separate article. Nor can we do any more than allude, at present, to that noble "Meditation among the Tombs of Literature," which closes the first volume, and which he entitles the "Vanity and Glory of Literature." It is full of sad truth, and its style and thinking are every way worthy of its author's genius.

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**ÆSCHYLUS; PROMETHEUS BOUND AND UNBOUND.\***

PROFESSOR BLACKIE has lately translated the "Prometheus Vincetus" into English verse. Without much ease, or grace, or melody, his translation is very spirited, and gives a more vivid idea of Æschylus, in his rugged energy and rapturous enthusiasm, than any other verse rendering we have read. But we are mistaken if the mere English reader does not derive a better notion of Æschylus still from the old prose versions. Best of all were such a translation as Dr. John Carlyle has executed of Dante, distinguished at once by correctness and energy. What a thing his brother Thomas could make of the "Prometheus" in his prose!

The sympathy which this great poet felt for the ancient mythology of his country, for gods to whom Jove was but a beardless boy, was strictly a fellow-feeling. He was a Titan among men; and we fancy him, sick of the present, and reverting to the past, tired of the elegant mannikins around, and stretching forth his arms to grasp the bulky shades of a bygone era. He had been a soldier, too, and this had probably infused into his mind a certain contempt for mankind as they were. He that mingles and takes a part in a battle-field, would require to be more than mortal to escape this feeling. seeing there, as he must, man writhen into all varieties of painful, shameful, despicable, and horrible attitudes. It was, indeed, at Marathon, Salamis, and perhaps Plataea, that he mingled in warfare; but the details of even these world-famous fights of freedom must have been as mean and disgusting as those of Borodino or Austerlitz. From man Æschylus turned pensively and proudly to the gods; first, to the lower circle of Jove and Apollo, but, with deeper reverence and fonder love, to that elder family whom they had supplanted. Of that fallen house he became and continued the laureate, till the boy Keats, with hectic heat and unearthly beauty, sang "Hyperion."

\* "Prometheus Bound" and "Unbound;" Blackie's "Æschylus;" Shelley's "Prometheus."

More strictly speaking, Æschylus was the poet of destiny, duty, and other great abstractions. He saw these towering over Olympus, reposing in his sleeping Furies, and shining like stars through the shadows of his gods. To him, whether consciously or unconsciously, the deities were embodied thoughts, as those of all men must in some measure be; and his thoughts, being of a lofty transcendental order, found fitter forms in the traditionary members of the Saturnian house, than in the more recent and more sharply-defined children of Jove.

His genius was lofty and bold, but rather bare and stern. Luxuriance and wealth of thought and imagination were hardly his; they are seldom found so high as the Promethean crags, although they sometimes appear in yet loftier regions, such as Job, Isaiah, and the "Paradise Lost." His language is the only faculty he ever pushes to excess. It is sometimes overloaded into obscurity, and sometimes blown out into extravagance. But it is the thunder, and no lower voice, which bellows among those lonely and difficult rocks, and it must be permitted to follow its own old and awful rhythm.

At Gela in Sicily, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, died this Titan—banished, as some think, at all events alienated, from his native country. It was fitting that he should have found a grave in the land of Etna and the Cyclopeses. There, into the hands of his Maker, he returned the "*blast* of the breath of his nostrils;" and a prouder and a more powerful spirit never came from, and never returned to God.

"Prometheus Bound" is not the most artistic or finished of Æschylus' plays; but it is the most characteristic and sublime. There are more passion and subtlety in the "Agamemnon;" but less intensity and imagination. The "Agamemnon" is his "Lear;" and the "Prometheus" his "Macbeth." It was natural that a mind so lofty and peculiar as this poet's should be attracted towards the strange and magnificent myth of Prometheus. It seemed a fable *waiting* for his treatment. Thus patiently, from age to age, have certain subjects, like spirits on the wrong side of Styx, or souls in their antenatal state, seemed to *wait* till men arose able to incarnate them in history or song. And it matters not how many prematurely try to give them embodiment! Their time is not yet, and

they must tarry on. Twenty plays on Lear might have been written, and yet the subject had remained virgin for Shakspeare. The subject of Faust had been treated, well or ill, before Goethe; but his is now *the* "Faust." So of Prometheus the Titan there had been many drawings or busts before, in antique Greek poetry; but it was reserved for Æschylus to cast him in colossal statuary, with head, limbs, and all *complete*.

Many were the attractions of the subject for him. First of all, Prometheus was a Titan—one of the old race, who reigned ere evil was; secondly, he was a benevolent and powerful being, suffering—a subject to meet and embrace which, all the noble sympathies of the poet's nature leaped up; thirdly, the story was full of striking points, peculiarly adapted both for the lyric and the drama; and, fourthly, there was here a gigantic mask ready, from behind which the poet could utter unrebuked his esoteric creed, and express at once his protest against things as they are, his notion of what they ought to be, and his anticipation of what they are yet to become. For these and other reasons, while the vulture fastens upon the liver of Prometheus, Æschylus leaps into, and possesses his soul.

The fable is as follows:—Prometheus, son of Japetus and Themis, or Clymene, instead of opposing Jove, as his brother Titans had, by force, employs cunning and counsel. He rears up and arms man as his auxiliary against Heaven. He bestows on him, especially the gift of fire, and enables him therewith to cultivate the arts, and to rise from his degradation. For this crime, Jove dooms him to be chained to a rock, with a vulture to feed upon his liver. But Prometheus, knowing that from Io's race would spring a demigod (Hercules), who would deliver him from his chains, suffered with heroic firmness; he was even acquainted with the future fate of Jove, which was unknown to the god himself. When this irresistible enemy of Jupiter should appear, Prometheus was to be delivered from his sufferings. The reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim was to be the price of the disclosure of the danger to his empire, from the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis was, in consequence of his disclosure, given in marriage to Pelcus; and Prometheus, with the per-

mission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Such is the story which Æschylus extended through three lyrical dramas, the first and last of which are irrecoverably lost.

A difficulty here arises, which has puzzled and disunited the critics and commentators. Does, or does not, Æschylus mean to represent Jupiter as a tyrant? If not, why do neither Mercury nor Ocean, who are introduced as his ministers, seek to defend his character against the attacks of the Titan? And yet, if he does, why should he afterwards, as Shelley remarks, intend a "catastrophe so feeble as the reconciliation of the champion with the oppressor of mankind?" To evade this difficulty, Shelley, in his play, overthrows Jupiter before Prometheus and Hercules combined. The champion triumphs over the oppressor. Professor Blackie, on the other hand denies that it was the purpose of the poet to represent Jove as a tyrant; but that he meant ultimately, in the closing drama, to unite the jarring claims of both—of Prometheus as the umpire between gods and men, and of Jove as possessing the supreme right to rule and to punish. But, first, he does not explain the *silence* of Jove's ministers as to the character of their calumniated lord; secondly, as a writer in the "Eclectic" shows, he wrests the words, and misrepresents the character of Ocean, whom Æschylus means manifestly for a time-server; thirdly, he does not answer the complaints of Prometheus himself, which seem to us on his theory quite overwhelming; and, lastly, he does not throw out the faintest glimpse of what could be the medium of reconciliation which the last play was to develop.

Two theories occur to us as to this knotty point. One is, that Æschylus, in his "*Prometheus Unbound*," meant to represent Jove as *repentant*; and, by timely penitence, saving his throne, and regaining his original character. Prometheus, according to this view, would assume the sublime attitude of the forgiver instead of the forgiven. The second and more probable theory is, that, in the last play, Æschylus meant to make it appear that Jove had been "playing a part;" though for the wisest and noblest reasons "hiding himself," as we might say, and that he meant to surprise Prometheus, as well as his own servants, and the universe, by producing suddenly

the reasons which had made him assume the aspect of the oppressor, and convince even his victim that his sufferings had been disguised benefits. These, however, are only conjectures. The poet's solution of the self-involved problem is hid in impenetrable darkness.

Were, however, the second of those conjectures allowed, it would, we think, give a clear, consistent, and almost a Christian meaning to the whole fable of the "Prometheus." Man and God are at variance: the one is abject and degraded—the other seems cold, distant, and cruel. Mediators, numerous, wise, and benevolent, rise up to heal, but seem rather to widen, the breach. They become victims before High Heaven. The divine vengeance, like a vulture, covers them with its vast wing. All their inventions add little, whether to their own happiness or to that of the species. They bear, however, on the whole, bravely; they suffer, on the whole, well. Their melodious groanings, become the poetry and the philosophy of the world. Their tragedies are sublime and hopeful. A golden thread of promise passes, from bleeding hand to bleeding hand, down the ages. The reconciliation is at last effected, by the interposition of a divine power. A Hercules is at last born, and glorified, who effects this surpassing labor. He shows that God has all along hid intolerable love and light under the deep shadows of this present time. He has punished Prometheus; he has allowed himself to be misrepresented; he has suffered man to fall; he has made the wisest of the race tenfold partakers of the common misery, that he might at last surprise them by dropping the veil of ages, and showing a face of ineffable love, the more glorious for the length of the obscurity and the suddenness of the discovery. The result is—heaven on earth—man, his Titan instructors, his Herculean deliverer, and his Heavenly Father, united in one family of changeless peace, and progressive felicity and glory.

Our readers will perceive in this a rude sketch of the great Christian scheme, rescued from the myths and shadows of Paganism. We by no means offer it with dogmatic confidence, as the one true explication. There are, we admit, subordinate parts in the fable which it leaves unexplained; and it assumes a termination to the last play of the "Trilogy" which is necessarily gratuitous. But it seems as probable as any other we

have met. It affords a striking and curious coincidence with some of our Christian verities. And, were it admitted, its effect would be to cast a more pleasing light upon the old world-moving story. The storm-beaten rock in the Scythian desert—the far lands below—the everlasting snows around—the bare head of the solitary, unsleeping, unweeping Titan—the blistering sun of noon—the cold Orion, and the Great Bear of night, which seem carrying tidings of *his* fate to distant immensities—the faithful vulture, “that winged hound” of hell, tapping at his side with her slow red beak—the sympathies of visitors—the stern succession of duty-doing ministers of wrath—and, lastly, the avatar of the long-expected Deliverer, shaking the Caucasus at his coming; and the meeting in mid-air of the two reconciled parties, amid the jubilant shouts of earth and heaven—all this would then shine upon us in a gleam, however remote and faint, from the Christian Sun.

From “Prometheus Bound” the Mystery, let us turn to look at it in a moment more, as “Prometheus Bound” the Poem. It is the only play in which you do not regret the rigid preservation of unity of place; for the place is so elevated, commands such a prospect, and is so strictly in keeping with the character and the subject, that you neither wish, nor could bear it shifted. The play is founded on a rock; and there it must stand. The action and the dialogue are severely simple and characteristic. Might and Force are strongly drawn. They are alike, but different. Might talks confidently, like a favored minion. Force is like a giant Nubian slave “made dumb by poison.” He speaks none, but his silent frown unites with Might’s loquacity in compelling Hephaestus to do his reluctant part in chaining the Titan to the rock. The Oceanides utters glorious *asides*. Has not every noble sufferer since the world began had his chorus, visible or invisible, to sympathise and to soothe him? Is not this a benevolent arrangement of the great Hidden Being who permits or presides over the tragedy? Socrates had friends wise and immortal as himself around him when he drank the hemlock. When Lord Russell was riding up Tower Hill, the multitude thought they saw “Liberty and Justice seated at his side.” And, if we may dare the reference, did not, near a greater sufferer than



them all, in the Garden, "an angel appear from heaven strengthening him?" Even when men supply the other elements of the tragedy, God provides the music, which is to soften, to sublimate, and to harmonize the whole. In consonance with this, the Grecian chorus may be called the divine commentary, or the running consolation made in music upon the dark main business of the play.

Ocean is a plausible sycophant. Io, although necessary, has the effect of an excrescence, albeit a beautiful one. The prophetic tale of her wanderings is one of those delicious passages, rarely to be found except in the Greeks, or in Milton, in which mere names of places become poetical by the artful opposition of associations connected with them. In this, which we call in a former paper *ideal geography*, Homer, Æschylus, and Milton are the three unequalled masters. Hear Æschylus:—

"First, Io, what remains  
Of thy far sweeping wanderings hear, and grave  
My words on the sure tablets of thy mind.  
When thou hast pass'd the narrow stream that parts  
The continents to the far flame-faced East,  
Thou shalt proceed the highway of the sun;  
Then cross the sounding ocean, till thou reach  
Cisthene and the Gorgon plains, where dwell  
Phorcey's three daughters. Them Phœbus, beamy-bright,  
Beholds not, nor the nightly moon. Near them  
Their winged sisters dwell, the Gorgons dire.

One more sight remains,  
That fills the eye with horror: mark me well;  
The sharp-beaked griffins, hounds of Jove, avoid,  
Fell dogs that bark not, and the one-eyed host  
Of Arimaspien horsemen with swift hoofs,  
Beating the banks of golden-rolling Pluto.  
A distant land, a swarthy people next  
Receives thee; near the fountains of the sun  
They dwell by Æthiop's wave. This river trace,  
Until thy weary feet shall reach the pass  
Whence from the Bybline heights the sacred Nile  
Pours his salubrious flood. The winding wave  
Thence to triangled Egypt guides thee, where  
A distant home awaits thee, fated mother  
Of no unstoried race."

Compare this with Milton's list of the fallen angels, or his description of the prospect from the Mount of the Temptation. But Prometheus himself absorbs almost all the interest, and

utters almost all the poetry in the play. He has been compared to Satan, and certainly, in grandeur of utterance, dignity of defiance, and proud patience of suffering, is comparable to no other. But there are important differences which, in our notion, elevate Prometheus as a moral being above, and sink him, as a brave and intellectual being, far below, that tremendous shadow of Milton's soul. Prometheus deems himself, and is, in the right; Satan is, and knows he is, in the wrong. Prometheus anticipates ultimate restoration; Satan expects nothing, and hardly wishes aught but revenge. Prometheus is waited on by the multitudinous sympathies of innocent immortals; Satan leans on his own soul alone, for the feeling of his fallen brethren toward him is rather the reverence of fear than the submission of love. Prometheus carries consciously the fate of the Thunderer in his hands; Satan knows the Thunderer has only to be provoked sufficiently to annihilate him. Prometheus on Caucasus is not unvisited or uncheered; Satan on Niphates Mount is utterly alone, and though miserable, is undaunted, and almost darkens the sun by his stern soliloquy. In one word, Prometheus is a great, good being, mysteriously punished; Satan is a great, bad being, reaping with quick and furious hand what he had sown; nay, warring with the whirlwind which from that sad sowing of the wind had sprung.

It was comparatively easy for Æschylus to enlist our sympathies for Prometheus, if once he were represented as good and injured. But, first, to represent Satan as guilty; again, to wring a confession of this from his own lips; and yet, thirdly, to teach us to admire, respect, pity, and almost love him all the while, was a problem which only a Milton was able either to state or to solve.

The words of Prometheus are consonant with his character. The groans of a god should be melodious; and not more so were those of Ariel from the centre of his cloven pine, where he "howled away twelve winters," than those of Prometheus from his blasted rock. As Professor Blackie remarks, he remained silent so "long as the ministers of justice are doing their duty." It were beneath him to quarrel with the mere ministers of another's pleasure. Nor does he deem those myrmidons worthy of hearing the complaints of his sublime wo.

But no sooner have they left him alone than he finds a fitter audience assembled around him in the old elements of nature; and, like the voice of one of their own tameless torrents, does he break out into his famous (miscalled) soliloquy. Soliloquy it is none, for he was never less alone than when now alone.

"Oh! divine ether, and swift-wing'd winds,  
And river-fountains, and of ocean waves  
The multitudinous laughter, and thou earth,  
Born mother of us all, and thou bright round  
Of the all-seeing sun, you I invoke!  
Behold what ignominy of causeless wrong  
I suffer from the gods, myself a god."

We are glad to find that the professor uses the word "laughter," instead of "dimple," of the ocean waves. It is stronger, and more suited to the lofty mood of the supposed speaker. But in what "part of the Old Testament" is the "broad, strong word laugh retained in descriptions of nature?" The floods, indeed, are said, by a still bolder image, to "clap hands," but nowhere to laugh. It is the Lord in the heavens who laughs; or it is the war-horse who laughs at the shaking of a spear. Inanimate objects are never said to laugh, although it were but in unison with the spirit of Hebrew poetry. The word "multitudinous" does not exactly please us, nor give the full sense of *αυαριθμουν*. We are almost tempted to coin a word, and to translate it the "*unarithmeticable* laughter of an ocean's billows."

Lines are scattered throughout which, in their strong, pike-pointed condensation, remind you of Satan's terrible laconicisms. The chorus, for instance, says—

"Dost thou not blench to cast such words about thee?"

Prometheus replies—

"How should I fear, who am a God, and *deathless*?"

Satan says—

"What matter *where*, if I be still the same?"

In the interview with Hermes, he retains the dignity of his bearing and the fearlessness of his language. And how he mingles poetry the loftiest, and protest the most determined,

in the description of the new horrors which he sees approaching his rock—the “pangs unfelt before”—the hell charged upon hell—that are at hand! The earth begins to quake below him. The sky gets dark over his head. The thunder bellows in his ears. Hermes leaves him, and the lightning succeeds, and “wreaths its fiery curls around him.” The dust of a whirlwind covers him. Winds from all regions meet, and fight, and fluctuate around his naked body. In the distance, the ocean, laughing no more, appears, mingling its angry billows with the stars. And as this many-folded garment of wrath wraps round, and conceals Prometheus from view, his voice is heard screaming out above all the roar of the warring elements the closing words—

“Mighty mother, worshipp'd Themis,  
Circling Ether that diffuseth  
Light, a common joy to all,  
*Thou beholdest these my wrongs!*”

Shelley was, and had a right to be, a daring genius. He had the threefold right of power, despair, and approaching death. He felt himself strong; he had been driven desperate; and he knew that his time was short. Hence, as a poet, he aimed at the boldest and greatest things. He must leap into death's arms from the loftiest pinnacle possible. But all his genius, determination, and feeling of having no time to lose, were counteracted in their efforts by a certain morbid weakness, which was partly the result of bodily suffering, and partly of the insulated position into which his melancholy creed had thrown him. He was a hero in a deep decline. Tall, swift, and subtle, he wanted body, sinews, and blood. His genius resembled a fine voice cracked. The only thoroughly manly and powerful things he has written are some parts of the “Revolt of Islam,” the “Cenci” as a whole, and the commencement and one or two passages throughout the “Prometheus.” The rest of his writings—even when beautiful as they generally are, and sincere, as they are always—are more or less fantastical and diseased. The “Cenci” itself, the most calm and artistic of his works, could never have been selected as a subject by a healthy or perfectly sane mind.

“Prometheus Unbound” is the most ambitious of his poems.

But it was written too fast. It was written, too, in a state of over-excitement, produced by the intoxication of an Italian spring, operating upon a morbid system, and causing it to flush over with hectic and half-delirious joy. Above all, it was written twenty years too soon, ere his views had consolidated, and ere his thought and language were cast in their final mould. Hence, on the whole, it is a strong and beautiful disease. Its language is loose and luxuriant as a "Moenad's hair;" its imagery is wilder and less felicitous than in some of his other poems. The thought is frequently drowned in a diarrhœa of words; its dialogue is heavy and prolix; and its lyrics have more flow of sound than beauty of image or depth of sentiment;—it is a false gallop rather than a great kindling race. Compared with the "Prometheus" of Æschylus, Shelley's poem is wordy and diffuse; lacks unity and simplicity; above all, lacks whatever human interest is in the Grecian work. Nor has it the massive strength, the piled-up gold and gems, the barbaric but kingly magnificence of Keats' "Hyperion."

Beauties, of course, of a rare order it possesses. The opening speech of Prometheus—his conversation with the Earth—the picture of the Hours—one or two of the choruses—and, above all, the description of the effects of the "many-folded shell," in regenerating the world, are worthy of any poet or pen; and the whole, in its wasted strength, mixed with beautiful weakness, resembling a forest struck with premature autumn, fills us with deep regrets that his life had not been spared. Had he, twenty years later, a healthier, happier, and better man, "clothed, and in his right mind," approached the sublime subject of the "Prometheus," no poet, save Milton and Keats, was ever likely to have so fully completed the Æschylean design.

The last act of this drama is to us a mere dance of darkness. It has all the sound and semblance of eloquent, musical, and glorying nonsense. But, apart from the mystic meanings deposited in its lyrics, Shelley's great object in this play, as in his "Queen Mab" and "Revolt of Islam," is to predict the total extinction of evil, through the progress and perfectionment of the human race. Man is to grow into the God of the world. We are of this opinion, too, provided the necessity of

*divine* sunshine and showers to consummate this growth be conceded. But Shelley's theory seems very hopeless. We may leave it to the scorching sarcasm, invective, and argument of Foster, in his "Essay on the Term Romantic." The Ethiop is to wash himself white; the leaper is to bathe away his leprosy in Abana and Pharpar, not in Jordan! We will believe it, as soon as we are convinced that human philosophy has of itself made any human being happy, and that there is not something in man requiring both a fiercer cautery and a robler balm to cure. "The nature of man still casts 'ominous conjecture on the whole success.' Till *that* be changed, extended plans of human improvement, laws, new institutions, and systems of education, are only what may be called the sublime mechanics of depravity." And what, we may add, *can* change that, short of an omnipotent fiat as distinct as that which at first spake darkness into light—chaos into a world? Of lyrics, and dramas, and poetic dreams, and philosophic theories, we have had enough; what we want is, the one master-word of Him who "spake with authority, and not as the scribes."

The great Promethean rock shall be visited by poet for poetic treatment no more again for ever. It is henceforth a "rock in the wilderness," smitten not into water, but into eternal sterility. But, although no poet shall ever seek in it the materials of another lofty song, yet its memory shall continue dear to all lovers of genius and man. Many a traveller, looking northward from the banks of the Kur, or southward from the sandy plains of Russia, to the snowy peaks of the Caucasus, shall think of Prometheus, and try to shape out his writhing figure upon the storm-beaten cliffs. Every admirer of Grecian or of British genius shall turn aside, and see the spectacle of tortured worth, crushed dignity, and vicarious valor, exhibited with such wonderful force and verisimilitude by Æschylus and his follower.

And those who see, or think they see, in the story of this sublime, forsaken, and tormented Titan—the virtuous, the benevolent, the friend of man—a faint shadow of the real tragedy of the cross, where the God-Man was "nailed," as Prometheus is said to have been, was exposed to public ignominy, had his heart torn by the vulture of a world's substitutionary anguish,

and at last, at the crisis of his agony, and while earth, and hell, and heaven were all darkening around him, cried out, "*Why hast thou forsaken me?*" (a fearful question, where you dare not lay the emphasis on any one, but must on *all* the words), cannot but feel more tender and awful emotions as they contemplate this outlying and unacknowledged *type* of the Crucified, suspended among the crags of the Caucasian wilderness.

### SHAKESPEARE.—A LECTURE.\*

IF a clergyman, thirty years ago, had announced a lecture on Shakspeare, he might, as a postscript, have announced the resignation of his charge, if not the abandonment of his office. Times are now changed, and men are changed along with them. The late Dr. Hamilton of Leeds, one of the most pious and learned clergymen in England, has left, in his "*Nugæ Literariæ*," a general paper on Shakspeare, and was never, so far as I know, challenged thereanent. And if you ask me one reason of this curious change, I answer, it is the long-continued presence of the spirit of Shakspeare, in all its geniality, breadth, and power, in the midst of our society and literature. He is among us like an unseen ghost, coloring our language, controlling our impressions, if not our thoughts, swaying our imaginations, sweetening our tempers, refining our tastes, purifying our manners, and effecting all this by the simple magic of his genius, and through a medium—that of dramatic writing and representation—originally the humblest, and not yet the highest, form in which poetry and passion have chosen to exhibit themselves. Waiving, at present, the consideration of Shakspeare in his form—the dramatist, let us look at him now

\* This having been originally delivered as a lecture, we have decided that it should retain the shape. "Shakspeare; a Sketch," would look, and be, a ludicrous idea. As well a mountain in a flower-pot, as Shakspeare in a single sketch. A sketch seeks to draw, at least, an outline of a whole. From a lecture, so much is not necessarily expected.

in his *essence*—the poet. But, first, does any one ask, What is a poet? What is the ideal of the somewhat indefinite, but large and swelling term—poet? I answer, the greatest poet is the man who most roundly, clearly, easily, and strikingly, reflects, represents, and reproduces, in an imaginative form, his own sight or observation, his own heart or feeling, his own history or experience, his own memory or knowledge, his own imagination or dream—sight, heart, history, memory, and imagination, which, so far as they are faithfully represented from his consciousness, do also reflect the consciousness of general humanity. The poet is more a mirror than a maker; he may, indeed, unite with his reflective power others, such as that of forming, infusing into his song, and thereby glorifying a particular creed or scheme of speculation; but, just as surely as a rainbow, rising between two opposing countries or armies, is but a feeble bulwark, so, the real power of poetry is, not in conserving, nor in resisting, nor in supporting, nor in destroying, but in meekly and fully reflecting, and yet recreating and beautifying all things. Poetry, said Aristotle, is *imitation*; this celebrated ephorism is only true in one acceptation. If it mean that poetry is in the first instance prompted by a conscious imitation of the beautiful, which gradually blossoms into the higher shape of unconscious resemblance, we demur. But if by imitation is meant the process by which love for the beautiful in art or nature, at first silent and despairing, as the child's affection for the star, strengthens, and strengthens still, till the admired quality is transfused into the very being of the admirer, who then pours it back in eloquence or in song, so sweetly and melodiously, that it seems to be flowing from an original fountain in his own breast; if this be the meaning of the sage when he says that poetry is imitation, he is unquestionably right. Poetry is just the saying Amen, with a full heart and a clear voice, to the varied symphonies of nature, as they echo through the vaulted and solemn aisles of the poet's own soul.

It follows, from this notion of poetry, that in it there is no such thing as *absolute* origination or creation; its Belight simply evolves the element which already has existed amidst the darkness—it does not call it into existence. It follows, again, that the grand distinction between philosophy and



poetry is, that while the former tries to trace things to their causes, and to see them as a great naked abstract scheme, poetry catches them as they are, in the concrete, and with all their verdure and flush about them; for even philosophical truths, ere poetry will reflect them, must be personified into life, and thus fitted to stand before her mirror. The ocean does not act as a prism to the sun—does not divide and analyse his light—but simply shows him as he appears to her in the full crown-royal of his beams. It follows still farther, that the attitude of the true poet is exceedingly simple and sublime. He is not an inquirer, asking curious questions at the universe—not a tyrant speculator, applying to it the splendid torture of investigation; his attitude is that of admiration, reception, and praise. He loves, looks, is enlightened, and shines—even as Venus receives and renders back the light of her parent sun.

If, then, the greatest poet be the widest, simplest and clearest reflector of nature and man, surely we may claim this high honor for Shakspeare—the eighth wonder of the world. “Of all men,” says Dryden, “he had the largest and most comprehensive soul!” You find everything included in him, just as you find that the blue sky folds around all things, and after every new discovery made in her boundless domains, seems to retire quietly back into her own greatness, like a queen, and to say, “I am richer than all my possessions;” thus Shakspeare never suggests the thought of being exhausted, any more than the sigh of an *Æolian* lyre, as the breeze is spent, intimates that the mighty billows of the air shall surge no more. Responsive as such a lyre to all the sweet or strong influences of nature, she must cease to speak, ere he can cease to respond. I can never think of that great brow of his, but as a large lake-looking-glass, on which, when you gaze, you see all passions, persons, and hearts: here, suicides striking their own breasts, there, sailors staggering upon drunken shores; here, kings sitting in purple, and there, clowns making mouths behind their backs; here, demons in the shape of man, and there angels in the form of women; here, heroes bending their mighty bows, and there, hangmen adjusting their greasy ropes; here, witches picking poisons, and culling infernal simples for their caldron, and there, joiners and weavers enacting their

piece of very tragical mirth, amid the moonlight of the "Midsummer Night's Dream;" here statesmen uttering their ancient saws, and there watchmen finding "modern instances" amid the belated revellers of the streets; here, misanthropes cursing their day, and there, pedlars making merry with the lasses and lads of the village fair; here, Mooncalfs, like Caliban, throwing forth eloquent curses and blasphemy, and there, maidens, like Miranda, "sole-sitting" by summer seas, beautiful as foam-bells of the deep; here, fairies dancing like motes of glory across the stage, and there, hush! it is the grave that has yawned, and, lo! the buried majesty of Denmark has joined the motley throng, which pauses for a moment to tremble at his presence. Such the spectacle presented on that great mirror! How busy it is, and yet how still! How melancholy, and yet how mirthful! Magical as a dream, and yet sharp and distinct as a picture! How fluctuating, yet how fixed! "It trembles, but it cannot pass away." It is the world—the world of every age—the miniature of the universe!

The times of Shakspeare require a minute's notice in our hour's analysis of his genius. They were times of a vast upheaving in the public mind. Protestantism, that strong man-child, had newly been born on the Continent, and was making wild work in his cradle. Popery, the ten-horned monster, was dying, but dying hard; but over England there lay what might be called a "dim religious light"—being neither the gross darkness of mediæval Catholicism, nor the naked glare of Non-conformity—a light highly favorable to the exercise of imagination—in which dreams seem realised, and in which realities were softened with the haze of dreams. The Book of God had been brought forth, like Joseph from his dungeon, freed from prison attire and looks—although it had not yet, like him, mounted its chariot of general circulation, and been carried in triumphal progress through the land. The copies of the Scriptures, for the most part, were confined to the libraries of the learned, or else chained in churches. Conceive the impetus given to the poetical genius of the country, by the sudden discovery of this spring of loftiest poetry—conceive it by supposing that Shakspeare's works had been buried for ages, and been dug up now. Literature in general had revived; and the soul of man, like an eagle newly fledged, and

looking from the verge of her nest, was smelling from afar many a land of promise, and many a field of victory. Add to this, that a New World had recently been discovered; and if California and Australia have come over us like a summer's (golden) cloud, and made not only the dim eye of the old miser gleam with joy, and his hand, perhaps, relax its hold of present, in the view of prospective gold, but made many a young bosom, too, leap at the thought of adventure upon those marvellous shores—and woven, as it were, a girdle of virgin gold round the solid globe—what must have been the impulse and the thrill, when first the bars of ocean were broken up, when all customary landmarks fled away, like the islands of the Apocalyptic vision, and when in their room a thousand lovely dreams seemed retiring, and beckoning as they retired, toward isles of palms, and valleys of enchantment, and mountains ribbed with gold, and seas of perfect peace and sparkling silver, and immeasurable savannahs and forests hid by the glowing west; and when, month after month, travelers and sailors were returning to testify by their tales of wonder, that such dreams were true, must not such an ocean of imaginative influence have deposited a rich residuum of genius? And that verily it did, the names of four men belonging to this period are enough to prove; these are, need I say? Edmund Spenser, Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, and William Shakspeare.

The Life of Shakspeare I do not seek to write, and do not profess to understand, after all that has been written regarding it. Still he seems to me but a shade, without shape, limit, or local habitation; having nothing but power, beauty, and grandeur. I cannot reconcile him to life, present or past. Like a Brownie, he has done the work of his favorite household, unheard and unseen. His external history is, in his own language, a blank; his internal, a puzzle, save as we may dubiously gather it from the escapes of his Sonnets, and the masquerade of his Plays.

“O Cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,  
Or but a wandering voice?”

A munificent and modest benefactor, he has knocked at the door of the human family at night; thrown in inestimable

wealth as if he had done a guilty thing; and the sound of his feet dying away in the distance is all the tidings he has given of himself.

Indeed, so deep still are the uncertainties surrounding the history of Shakspeare, that I sometimes wonder that the process applied by Strauss to the Life of our Saviour has not been extended to his. A Life of Shakspeare, on this worthy model, would be a capital exercise for some aspiring sprig of Straussism!

I pass to speak of the qualities of his genius. First of these, I name a quality to which I have already alluded—his universality. He belongs to all ages, all lands, all ranks, all faiths, all professions, all characters, and all intellects. And why? because his eye pierced through all that was conventional, and fastened on all that was eternal in man. He knew that in humanity there was one heart, one nature, and that "God had made of one blood all nations who dwell on the face of the earth." He saw the same heart palpitating through a myriad faces—the same nature shining amid all varieties of customs, manners, languages, and laws—the same blood rolling red and warm below innumerable bodies, dresses and forms. It was not, mark you, the universality of indifference—it was not that he loved all beings alike—it was not that he liked Iago as well as Imogen, Bottom or Bardolph as well as Hamlet or Othello; but that he saw, and showed, and loved, in proportion to its degree, *so much* of humanity as all possessed. Nature, too, he had watched with a wide yet keen eye. Alike the spur of the rooted pine-tree and the "grey" gleam of the willow leaf drooping over the death-stream of Ophelia—(he was the first in poetry, says Hazlitt, to notice that the leaf is grey only on the side which bends down)—the nest of the temple-haunting martlet with his "loved mansionry," and the eagle eyrie which "buildeth on the cedar's top, and dallies with the wind and scorns the sun"—the forest of Arden, and the "blasted heath of Forres"—the "still vexed Bermoothes, and the woods of Crete"—"the paved fountains," "rushing brooks," "pelting rivers," "the beached margents of the sea," "sweet summer buds," "hoary headed-frosts," "childing autumn," "angry winter," the "sun robbing the vast sea," and the "moon her pale fire snatching from the sun!"



to magnify his own powers, and his solitary bravo is heard resounding at the close of every paragraph. Another wishes to imitate another writer—a base ambition, pardonable only in children. A third, scorning slavish imitation, wishes to emulate some one school or class of authors. A fourth writes deliberately and professedly *ad captandum vulgus*. A fifth, worn to dregs, is perpetually wishing to imitate his former doings, like a child crying to get yesterday back again. Shakespeare, when writing, thought no more of himself, or other authors, than the Sun when shining thinks of Sirius, of the stars composing the Great Bear, or of his own proud array of beams.

This unconsciousness, or impersonality, I have always held to be the highest style of genius. I am aware, indeed, of a subtle objection. It has been said by a high authority—John Sterling—that men of genius are conscious, not of what is peculiar in the individual, but of what is universal in the race; of what characterises, not a man, but man; not of their own individual genius, but of the Great Spirit moving within their minds. Yet what in reality is this but the unconsciousness for which the author, to whom Sterling is replying, contends. When we say that men of genius, in their highest moods, are unconscious, we mean, not that these men become the mere tubes through which a foreign influence descends, but that certain emotions or ideas so fill and possess them, as to produce temporary forgetfulness of themselves, save as the passive though intelligent instruments of the feeling or the thought. It is true that afterwards self may suggest the reflection—the fact that we have been selected to receive and convey such melodies proves our breadth and fitness—it is from the oak, not the reed, that the wind elicits its deepest music; but, in the first place, this thought never takes place at the same time with the true afflatus, and is almost inconsistent with its presence—it is a mere after inference;—an inference, secondly, which is not always made;—nay, thirdly, an inference which is often rejected, when the prophet, off the stool, feels tempted to regard with suspicion or shuddering disgust the result of his raptured hour of inspiration. Milton seems to have shrunk back at the retrospect of the height he had reached in the “Paradise Lost,” and preferred his “Paradise Regained.”

Shakspeare, having written his tragic miracles under a more entire self-abandonment, became in his sonnets, owing to a reflex act of sagacity, aware of what feats he had done. Bunyan is carried on, through all the stages of his immortal pilgrimage, like a child in the leading-strings of her nurse, but, after looking back upon its contemplated course, begins, with all the harmless vanity of a child (see the prefatory poem to the second part), to crow over the achievement. Burns, while composing "Tam o' Shanter," felt little else than the animal rapture of the excitement; it dawned on him afterwards that he had produced his finest poem. Thus all gifted spirits do best when they know not what they do. The boy Tell was great,

"Nor knew how great he was."

I mention next his humanity. It was said of Burns, that if you had touched his hand it would have burned yours. And although Shakspeare, being a far broader and greater, was, consequently, a calmer man, yet I would not have advised any very timid person to have made the same experiment with him. Poor Hartley Coleridge wrote a clever paper, in "Blackwood," entitled "Shakspeare a Tory and a Gentleman;" I wish some one had answered it, under the title, "Shakspeare a Radical and a Man." A man's heart beats in his every line. He loves, pities, feels for, as well as with, the meanest of his fellow "human mortals." He addresses men as brothers, and as brothers have they responded to his voice.

I need scarcely speak of his simplicity. He was a child as well as a man. His poetry, in the language of Pitt, comes "sweetly from nature." It is a "gum" oozing out without effort or consciousness: occasionally, indeed (for I do not, like the Germans, believe in the infallibility of Shakspeare,) he condescends to indite a certain swelling, rumbling bombast, especially when he is speaking through the mouth of kings; but even his bombast comes rolling out with an ease and a gusto, a pomp and prodigality, which are quite delightful. Shakspeare's nonsense is like no other body's nonsense. It is always the nonsense of a great genius. A dignitary of the Church of England went once to hear Robert Hall. After listening with delight to that great preacher, he called at his

house. He found him lying on the floor, with his children performing somersets over him. He lifted up his hands in wonder, and exclaimed, "Is that the great Robert Hall?"—"Oh," replied Hall, "I have all my nonsense out of the pulpit, you have all yours in it." So Shakspeare, after having done a giant's work, could take a giant's recreation; and were he returning to earth, would nearly laugh himself dead again, at the portentous attempts of some of his critics to prove his nonsense sense, his blemishes beauties, and his worst puns fine wit!

The subtlety of Shakspeare is one of his most wonderful qualities. Coleridge used to say, that he was more of a philosopher than a poet. His penetration into motives, his discernment of the most secret thoughts and intents of the heart, his discrimination of the delicate shades of character, the manner in which he makes little traits tell large tales, the complete grasp he has of all his characters, whom he lifts up and down like ninepins, the innumerable paths by which he reaches similar results, the broad, comprehensive maxims on life, manners, and morals, which he has scattered in such profusion over his writings, the fact, that he never repeats a thought, figure, or allusion, the wonderful art he has of identifying himself with all varieties of humanity—all proclaim the inexhaustible and infinite subtlety of his genius, and when taken in connection with its power and loftiness, render him the prodigy of poets and of men. I once, when a student, projected a series of essays, entitled "Sermons on Shakspeare," taking for my texts some of those profound and far-reaching sentences, which abound in him, where you have the fine gold, which is the staple of his works, collected in little knots, or nuggets of thick gnarled magnificence. It was this quality in him which made a French author say, that, were she condemned to select three volumes for her whole library, the three would be Bacon's Essays, the Bible, and Shakspeare. You can never open a page of his dramas without being startled at the multitude of sentences which have been, and are perpetually being, quoted. The proverbs of Shakspeare, were they selected, would be only inferior to the proverbs of Solomon.

When I name purity as another quality of this poet, I may be thought paradoxical. And yet, when I remember his peri-



od, his circumstances, the polluted atmosphere which he breathed; when I compare his writings with those of contemporary dramatists; when I weigh him in the scales with many of our modern authors; and when I remember that his writings never seek to corrupt the imagination, to shake the principles, or to influence the passions of men, I marvel how thoroughly his genius has saved him, harmless, amid formidable difficulties, and say, that Marina in his own "Pericles," did not come forth more triumphantly scathless, than does her poet. Let those who prate of Shakspeare's impurity first of all read him candidly; secondly, read, *if they can*, Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher; and thirdly, if they have Bowdler's contemptible "Family Shakspeare," fling it into the fire, and take back the unmutilated copy to their book-shelves and their bosoms. The moonlight is not contaminated by shining on a dunghill, and neither is the genius of Shakspeare by touching transiently, on its way to higher regions, upon low, loathsome or uncertain themes. His language is sometimes coarse, being that of his age; his spirit belonging to no age (would I could say the same of Burns, Byron, Moore, and Eugene Sue), is always clean, healthy, and beautiful.

His imagination and fancy are nearly equal, and, like two currents of air, are constantly interpenetrating. They seem twins—the one male, the other female. Not only do both stand ever ready to minister to the subtlest and deepest motions of his intellect, and all the exigencies of his plots (like spray, which decorates the river, when running under ground, as well as when shining in the sunlight), but he has, besidea, committed himself to several distinct trials of the strength of both. The caldron in "Macbeth" stands up an unparalleled collection of dark and powerful images, all shining as if shown in hell-fire, and accompanied by a dancing, mirthful measure, which adds unspeakably to their horror. It is as though a sentence of death were given forth in doggerel. And, for light and fanciful figures, we may take either Titania's speech to the Fairies, or the far-famed description of Queen Mab by Mercutio. In these passages, artistic aim is for a season abandoned. A single faculty, like a horse from a chariot stud, breaks loose, and revels and riots in the fury of its power.

Shakspeare's wit and humor are bound together in general

by the amiable band of good-nature. What a contrast to Swift! He loathes; Shakspeare, at the worst, hates. His is the slaving and ferocious ire of a maniac; Shakspeare's that of a man. Swift broods like their shadow over the festering sores and the moral ulcers of humanity; Shakspeare touches them with a ray of poetry, which beautifies, if it cannot heal. "Gulliver" is the day-book of a fiend; "Timon" is the magnificent outbreak of an injured angel. His wit, how fertile, quick, forgetive! Congreve and Sheridan are poor and forced in the comparison. How long they used to sit hatching some clever conceit; and what a cackling they made when it had chipped the shell! Shakspeare threw forth a Mercutio or a Falstaff at once, each embodying in himself a world of laughter, and there an end. His humor, how broad, rich, subtle, powerful, and full of genius and geniality, it is! Why, Bardolph's red nose eclipses all the dramatic characters that have succeeded. Ancient Pistol himself shoots down the whole of the Farquhars, Wycherleys, Sheridans, Goldsmiths, and Colmans, put together. Dogberry is the prince of Donkeys, past, present, and to come. When shall we ever have such another tinker as Christopher Sly? Sir Andrew Aguecheek? the very name makes you *quake* with laughter. And like a vast sirloin of English roast beef, rich and dripping, lies along the mighty Falstaff, with humor oozing out of every corner and cranny of his vast corporation.

Byron describes man as a pendulum, between a smile and tear. Shakspeare, the representative of humanity, must weep as well as laugh, and his tears, characteristically, must be large and copious. What variety, as well as force, in his pathetic figures! Here pines in the center of the forest the melancholy Jacques, musing tenderly upon the sad pageant of human life, finding sermons in stones, although not "good in everything," now weeping beside a weeping deer, and now bursting out into elfish laughter, at the "fool" he found in the forest. Here walks and talks, in her guilty and desperate sleep, the Fiend Queen of Scotland, lighted on her way by the fire that never shall be quenched, which is already kindled around her, seeking in vain to sweeten her "little" hand, on which there is a spot with which eternity must deal, and yet moving you to weep for her as you tremble. Here turns away from men

for ever the haughty Timon, seeking his low grave beside, and his only mourner in, the everlasting brine of the sea. Here the noble Othello, mad with imaginary wrongs, bends over the bed of Desdemona, and kisses ere he kills the purest and best of women. Here Juliet awakes too late for her fatal sleep, and finds a dead lover where she had hoped to find a living husband. Here poor Ophelia, garlanded with flowers, sinks into her pool of death—a pool which might again and again have been replenished from the tears which her story has started. And here, once king of England, but now king of the miserable in every clime—once wise in everything but love, now sublime in madness—once wearing a royal coronet, now crowned with the howling blackness of heaven above his grey dishevelled locks—once clad in purple, now wreathing around him fantastic wreaths of flowers—it is Lear who cries aloud—

“Ye heavens!

If ye do love old men, if your sweet sway

Hallow obedience, if *yourselves are old*,

Make it your cause—avenge me of my daughters.”

That Shakspeare is the greatest genius the world ever saw, is acknowledged now by all sane men; for even France has, at last, after many a reluctant struggle, fallen into the procession of his admirers. But that Shakspeare also is out of all sight and measure the finest artist that ever constructed a poem or drama, is a less general, and yet a growing belief. By no mechanical rules, indeed, can his works be squared. But tried, as all great works should be, by principles of their own—principles which afterwards control and create their true criticism (for it is the office of the critic to find out and expound the elements which mingled in the original inspiration—not to test them by a preconceived and arbitrary standard), and when, especially, you remember the object contemplated by the poet, that of mirroring the motly life of man, his works appear as wonderful in execution as in conception. Their very faults are needed to prove them human, otherwise their excellencies would have classed them with the divine.

It is amusing to read the criticism which the eighteenth century passed upon Shakspeare. They did not, in fact, know very well what to make of him. They walked and talked

"about him, and about him." I am reminded of the astonishment felt by the inhabitants of Lilliput at the discovery of Gulliver, the "Man Mountain." One critic mounted on a ladder to get a nearer view of the phenomenon. Another peered at him through a telescope. A third insisted on strapping him down by the ligatures of art. A fourth measured his size geometrically. But all agreed, that although much larger, he was much coarser and uglier than themselves; and expressed keen regret that so much strength was not united with more symmetry. He seemed to them a monster, not a man. Voltaire, with the dauntless effrontery of a monkey, called him an enormous dunghill, with a few pearls scattered upon it—unconsciously thereby re-enacting the part of Dogberry, and degrading from the monkey into the ass.

In our day all this is changed. Shakspeare no more seems a large lucky barbarian, with wondrous powers growing wild and straggling, but a wise man, wisely managing the most magnificent gifts. His art—whether you regard it as moulding his individual periods, or as regulating his plays—seems quite as wonderful as his genius. Men criticise now even the successful battles of Napoleon, and seek very learnedly to show that he ought not to have gained them, and that by all the rules of war it was very ridiculous in him to gain them. But Shakspeare's great victories can stand every test, and are seen not only to be triumphs of overwhelming genius, but of consummate skill.

Ere glancing at his plays individually, I would, first of all, try to divide them under various classes. The division which occurs to me as the best, is that of his metaphysical, his imaginative, his meditative, his passionate, his historical, and his comic dramas. His metaphysical plays are, properly speaking, only two—"Macbeth" and "King Lear." I call them metaphysical, not in the common sense, but in Shakspeare's own sense of the word. Lady Macbeth says—

"Hie thee hither,  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
And chastise with the valour of my tongue,  
All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
Which fate and *metaphysical* aid doth seem,  
To have thee crown'd withal."

Metaphysics means here an agency beyond nature, and at the same time evil. Now, in "Macbeth," it is this metaphysical power which, through the witches, controls like destiny the whole progress of the play. In "Lear," not only does destiny brood over the whole, but the hell-dog of madness—which in Shakspeare is metaphysical power—is let loose. In some other plays, it is true, he introduces superhuman agents, but in these two alone all the springs seem moved by a dark unearthly power. By his imaginative plays, I mean those where his principal object is to indulge that one stupendous faculty of his. Such are the "Tempest" and the "Midsummer Night's Dream." These are selections from his dream-book. By his meditative plays, I mean those in which incident, passion, and poetry are made subservient to the workings of subtle and restless reflection. Such are "Hamlet," "Timon," and "Measure for Measure." His passionate plays—for example "Othello" and "Romeo and Juliet"—are designed to paint, whether in simple or compound form, whether stationary, progressive, or interchanging, the passions of humanity. His historical and comic plays explain themselves. All his plays, indeed, have more or less of all those qualities, "floating, mingling, interweaving." But I have thus arranged them according to the master element and purpose of each.

Let me select one of the different classes for rapid analysis. And I feel myself, first of all, attracted toward the wierd and haggard tragedy of "Macbeth." And, first, in this play we must notice again its *metaphysical* character. A nightmare from hell presses down all the story and all the characters. From the commencement of the race to its close, there is a fiend—the fiend sitting behind the rider, and at every turn of the dark descending way you hear his suppressed or his resounding laughter. All is out of nature. The ground reels below you. The play is a caldron, mixed of such ingredients as the Wierd Sisters, a blasted heath, an air-drawn dagger, the blood-boltered ghost of a murdered man rising to sup with his murderer, lamentings heard in the air, strange screams of death, horses running wild and eating each other, a desperate king asking counsel at the pit of Acheron, an armed head, a bloody child, a child crowned and with a tree

in his hand, and eight kings rising from the abyss to answer his questions, a moving forest, a sleep-walking and suicide queen—such are some of the ingredients which a cloudy hand seems to shed into the broth, till it bubbles over with terror and blood. It is not a tragedy, but a collection of tragedies—the death of Duncan being one, that of Banquo another, that of Macduff's family another, that of Lady Macbeth another, and that of Macbeth himself a fifth. And yet the master has so managed them, by varying their character and circumstances, and relieving them by touches of imagination, that there is no repletion—we “sup,” but not “full,” of horrors. By his so potent art, he brings it about, that his supernatural and human persons never jostle. You never wonder at finding them on the stage together; they meet without a start, they part without a shiver; they obey one power, and you feel, that not only does one touch of nature make the “whole world kin,” but that it can link the universe in one brotherhood. It is the humanity which bursts out of every corner and crevice of this drama, like grass and wild flowers from a ruin, that reconciles you to its otherwise intolerable desolation.

This crowding in, and heaping up, distinguish the style, sentiment, imagery, and characters, as well as the incidents of “Macbeth.” It is a short play, but the style is uniformly massive—the sentiment and imagery are rich to exuberance—the characters stand out, mild or terrible wholes, distinct from each other as statues, even when dancing their wild dance together, to the music of Shakspeare's magical genius. Banquo, Duncan, Macduff, and Malcolm, have all this distinct colossal character. But the most interesting persons in the drama are the Witches, Macbeth, and his dark Ladye! What unique creations the witches are! Borderers between earth and hell, they have most of the latter. Their faces are faded, and their raiment withered in its fires. Their age seems supernatural; their ugliness, too, is not of the earth. A wild mirth mingles with their malice; they have a certain strange sympathy with their victims; they fancy them and toy with Macbeth while destroying him, as a cat with a mouse. They do not ride on broomsticks, nor even on winds; their motions have a dream-like rapidity and ease. They are connected, too, with a mythology of Shakspeare's own making, perfectly new and com

plete. They come and go, and you are left in total uncertainty as to their nature, origin, and history, and must merely say, "the air hath bubbles as the water hath. And these are of them." Altogether, they are the most singular daughters of Shakspeare; and you wonder what Desdemona, Cordelia, and Imogen would have thought of their Wierd Sisters.

Next comes the gloomy tyrant of Scotland. I figure him as a tall, strong, dark-haired, dark-eyed, black-browed mountaineer, possessing originally a strong, if not a noble nature. Ambition is dropped like hagseed by the fiends into his bosom, and in the progress of its growth makes him first a murderer, and ultimately a desperate madman. Not natively cruel, he at last, from the necessities of his career, must dine, breakfast, and supper on blood. Yet there is something to me exceedingly pensive as well as sublime in all the actions and utterances of Macbeth's despair. It is a powerful nature at bay, and his language in its fierce sweep—its lurid magnificence—its lofty yet melancholy tone—its wild moralising, reminds us of that which Milton puts into the mouth of the Prince of Darkness. Hear the celebrated lines:—

"Wherefore was that cry ?

*Sey.* The queen, my lord, is dead.

*Mac.* She should have died hereafter,  
There would have been time for such a word—  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow;  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle,  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing."

How terribly has despair concentrated and sharpened the intellect which can, in the crisis of its fate, thus moralise. I have sometimes compared Macbeth to Saul the unhappy King of Israel. Like him he has risen from a lower station; like him, he has cemented his tottering throne by blood; like him, he is possessed by an evil spirit; like him, at last he becomes desperate. Macbeth hies to consult the Wierd Sisters; Saul, the Philistines being upon him—David at a distance—Samuel

dead—God refusing to answer him by Urim, or prophets, or dreams—goes in his extremity and knocks at the door of Hell.

About Lady Macbeth there has been much needless critical discussion. Some have painted her in colors supernaturally dark and deformed, another and more hideous Hecate. Others have, in defending, gone so far as to make her almost amiable; who, I suppose, kissed as she killed the sleeping grooms. I can coincide with neither of those notions—if, indeed, the latter have formed itself into a proper and solid notion. I look upon Lady Macbeth as a female shape of her husband—his shadow in the other sex—a specimen of the different effects which the same passion produces upon different sexes. The better the sex, the worse are the evil consequences, *corruptio optumæ pessuma*. Even as a female infidel, or a female debauchee, is incomparably worse than a male in similar predicaments; so with a female murderer—one drained of all the feelings of humanity by the prevalence of a bad ambition. Foster speaks of Lady Macbeth's pure demoniac firmness—meaning to intimate that she was originally worse than her husband, but, in reality, well describing the more total and terrible induration which vice or cruelty produces in a female bosom. It makes man a butcher, and woman a fiend. These very terms, indeed, are applied through Malcolm to the pair:—

“ This dead butcher and his fiend-like queen.”

—words which, though uttered through the voice of an enemy, seem intended to convey Shakspeare's own notion of their ultimate characters: only Macbeth must be admitted to have become an inspired butcher ere the close!

And how thoroughly in keeping their different dooms! Macbeth, having sinned as a man, dies like a man, in broad battle, with harness on his back, yielding rather to destiny than to the foe. His lady, having offended against the nobler code, and the higher nature of woman, has a different fate. After long internal anguish, expressed not to the full, even by her awful sleep, she perishes by her own hand. Woman, inferior it may be to man in intellect, is so far superior in moral qualities, that when these are violated, the pillars of humanity shake, and destruction, in one or other of its forms, must



avenge the outrage committed against the very highest feelings of human nature.

From his imaginative plays I select "The Tempest." I said before, that in poetry there was no absolute origination. If anything could induce me to recall this opinion, it were the recollection of this marvellous play. It rises before us as the New World to the eye of Columbus, fresh, peopled with strange forms, glittering with dew, and radiant in sunshine. As in "Macbeth," all is strange, but, unlike it, all is glad and genial. Its magic is mild and harmless. The lightnings of this tempest affright, but they do not burn. The "Isle" is full of noises, but they are most of them soothing and musical—

"Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices,  
That if I waked after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again."

Here all the stern laws both of nature and of the world are repealed. The very villains of the play are treated with lenity—exposed—countermined—but not punished. And what beauty shines in this lonely place from the face of Miranda, the fairest, simplest, noblest female ever made by genius. And what aerial life is given to the scene, by the presence of Ariel, that gay creature of the elements, light as the down of the thistle, yet powerful as the thunderbolt, so "*delicate*" in the discharge of his mighty tasks, possessed at once of omnipotence and of *tact*, and whose songs have in them a snatch of the sphere music. Hear him, in the prospect of liberty, singing—

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I;  
In a cowslip's bell I lie:  
There I couch where owls do cry,  
On the bat's back I do fly,  
After summer, merrily:  
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs from the bough."

And what a savage seal-skin ornament to the whole is the redoubted Caliban—the misshapen Mooncalf—rude, revengeful, ignorant, lustful, and who yet caught in this enchanted circle, and surrounded by the influences of this magic isle,

when sober speaks, and when drunk belches out the finest imagination and poetry.

Surely Shakspeare, when he wrote the "Tempest," must have been in the gladdest of all his moods. I fancy him writing it on the first week of a beautiful spring, when nature leaps at once out of the icy grasp of winter into summer's full flush and glory, and when every heart leaps in unison, and finds a new joy and life-like heaven suddenly infused into it, and life, love, beauty, and joy, seem for a season to compose all the categories of being.

"Hamlet" is Shakspeare's grand poetical puzzle, confessedly the most intellectual of all his dramas, and expresses most fully, although by no means most clearly, the results of his deep, subtle, and long-continued musings upon man, and all the strange phenomena by which, in this little life of his, he is surrounded.

Coleridge once remarked, that Shakspeare never seems to have come to his full height, else he had not been a man, but a monster. Had he written, we may add, ten plays equal to "Hamlet," this monstrous growth had been complete. Its wisdom, so deep and varied—its calm mastery—its profusion of incidents and characters—the skill with which the most contradictory elements, from a ghost to a gravedigger, are harmonised—the philosophic self-possession, united to the burning passion and the imaginative interest—the combination of breadth and length, of height and depth—the mere size of the canvas chosen—the mystic uncertainty of the whole co-existing with singular clearness and finish in most of the parts—the rapidity of the transitions—the unflagging spirit of the dialogue, and the energy of the soliloquies—all go to constitute it a unique amidst a world of uniques, the most wonderful of wonders, the most Shakspearian of Shakspeare's works. Shakspeare in "Hamlet," seems *growing* into that somewhat greater than himself, for which at present we want a name, and was arrested, we might almost think, while becoming the *tertium quid* between man and a superior order of intelligences.

It is the point of view maintained in "Hamlet" which gives it its peculiar power as a meditative play. Hamlet is a man loosened in a great measure from earth, although not

utterly exasperated against it. He sees it not at the point of the misanthrope, nor altogether at that of the maniac, but at that of one who is half-way toward *both* these characters. His sadness casts a moonlight of contemplation around all things, which, as it shines, now twists them into odd and mirthful attitudes, invests them now with shadowy horror, and now with pleasing gloom. Man and woman have both ceased to delight him, but have not ceased to be objects of eager interest, curiosity, and speculation. Driven by circumstances and temperament toward an insulated position, he pauses, in his full retreat from mankind, to record his impressions of them. Madame Roland, on her way to the scaffold, wished she had been able to record the strange thoughts which were rising in her mind. So Hamlet—a wounded deer seeking the forest of death, separated from men for ever—*has*, in immortal soliloquies, in pungent lines, in wild and whirling words, or in wilder laughter, uttered the strange ideas which he felt flocking around his mind. Profound as wisdom itself are many of these thoughts, and expressed in sentences of the most compact significance.

But this characteristic extends to the whole play. Hamlet has infected all the subordinate characters with his own wisdom. Old Polonius talks at times like another Dr. Johnson; Ophelia is far too wise for one so young; the king himself hiccups aphorisms; and the ghost, while he says, "Brief must I be, I smell the hour of dawn," makes up for the brevity by the pith of his speeches. Indeed, had "Hamlet" appeared in this century, we should have said, that it was constructed on the principle of bringing in all the fine thoughts which had been accumulating for years on the pages of its author's note-book. But such a practice was, in Shakspeare's day, unknown; and, in a writer of his rich and spontaneous power, is unlikely, if not impossible.

In "Hamlet," strong distemperature of mind ministers the principal part of the interest. It is so, too, with his "Winter's Tale," his "Othello," his "Timon of Athens," his "King Lear," and his "Macbeth." These are dreams of Shakspeare's darker moods, for the smile of the "gentle Willy" disguised often wild tumults of thought and feeling, and resembled that red morning sunshine which introduces long days of tem-

pest. There was a vein in Shakspeare's heart running in a deep and secret channel seldom disclosed, but which found now and then a fearful vent in his impersonations of the jealous lover, the maniac, the misanthrope, the murderous king, or the wild, changeful, witty, exasperated, and more than half maddened prince. In these he is thoroughly in earnest; the large iron which has pierced a large soul is boldly displayed; and, under a thin mask, you see the biggest of human hearts agitated to agony, and the most sweet-blooded of men doing well to be angry even unto death. It is terribly sublime to stand by the shore of an angry Shakspeare, and to see him, like the troubled sea, casting out a furious, yet rainbow-tinted spray, against the hollowness and the abuses of human society, and making sport, for a season, of man himself! Thus Timon seems to fling his platters of hot water *past* his flatterers upon humanity at large; thus Lear shrieks up questions to the heavens, which make the gloomy curtains of night to shiver; thus Macbeth, when not hewing at his enemies, is cutting, with a like desperate hand, at the problems of human life and destiny; and thus Hamlet, while dancing on his wild erratic way to his uncle's death, tramples on many an ancient saw, and makes many a popular error to tremble below his uncontrollable feet.

This did not, as some might imagine, arise from the necessity of fully impersonating certain eccentric characters; for, first, why did he create or select such characters at all? and, secondly, could he have presented them with such effect without profound sympathy for them? Shakspeare was not a mere mimic or mocking-bird: he spoke out of the abundance of a universal heart, he reproduced himself in many of his characters, and his frequent choice and *con amore* treatment of dark and morbid subjects, seem conclusively to show that there was a fever somewhere in his own system, although it has often been identified, and that, on the whole, justly, with all that is genial and gentle. It was, indeed, *a priori* impossible that a being who formed the microcosm and mirror of humanity should not reflect its shadows as well as its lights; and that, as the representative of man, he should not pass through man's hour of darkness.

There is no play in all Shakspeare's works, if we, perhaps,

except "Timon" and "Lear," where the interest and power are so inextricably interwoven with the main character as in "Hamlet." *He* is the play. Compared to him, the other characters seem shadows as unsubstantial as his father's ghost. That ghost himself is hardly so interesting as his son. Like shadows swaying to the motions of their substances, do the various characters obey Hamlet's changeful whims, yield to his tempestuous rage, and echo his wild wisdom. Never was the overbearing influence of one driven on the wind of destiny, over idle and commonplace personages, more powerfully displayed. Truly, the slightest whisper of real despair is thunder, its merest touch is iron, its breath an irresistible tempest! It will bespeak a visiter from the other world, "although all hell should yawn;" it will make "a ghost" of any one who dares to stand in its fierce way.

Many critics, while seeking to unravel the mystery of Hamlet's character, have omitted to notice what is the main moral and purpose of the play—that is, unquestionably, to show the ramified wretchedness springing from crime. This it is which is the root of all the mischief and calamity in the play. This disturbs the grave, embroils the state, infuriates and half deranges the great soul of Hamlet, and is avenged by the successive deaths of Polonius, Ophelia, Hamlet, the king, the queen, and Laertes. *This* object of the poet is thoroughly gained. Nemesis is left sitting upon heaps of carcasses, and surveying with an iron smile the manifold and mingling streams of blood, which are all traceable to the one murder in the garden. And the moral is—crime never speaks without being answered by echo upon echo from the rocks of eternal justice; and, in the ruin which follows, the innocent are often as deeply involved as the guilty.

Shakspeare, no doubt, puts into the mouths of his characters words which might seem to accuse Providence. Hamlet, in one of his last speeches, calls it a "harsh world." And Horatio's language, when, in summing up the whole eventful history, he speaks of

"Cruel, bloody, and unnatural acts,  
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,  
Purposes mistook,"

is hardly that of profound faith. But both are speaking from partial and one-sided points of view; whereas the spirit of the whole play, and many of the words, go to teach us that in everything there is a purpose, that Providence "commends the poisoned chalice" to the lips of those who have mingled it, and that the inequalities and gaps which do exist in the administration of human affairs are but the open mouths of a general cry for a scene of more perfect retribution in another world

But two deductions from the catastrophe of Hamlet seem possible: the one, that this world is a mere atheistic hubbub, the scene of innumerable wrongs—wrongs, too, mixing and intertwining for evermore, and which are never to be redressed; or that there must be a future state. We advise any one who is doubtful as to which of these conclusions Shakspeare wished us to draw, first to ponder the impression left on his own mind as he rises from the perusal of the play, for that, let him depend on it, is the impression the poet meant to leave; and then to read carefully Hamlet's several soliloquies, and the soliloquy of the miserable king. In these, and throughout the play, the power of conscience, the supremacy of the "canons of the Eternal," the existence of a future world, and the influence of prayer with God, are recognised in language so decided, and in a manner so sincere, that we are led, and many may be driven, to the conviction, that this most profound of dramas—this broadest of all panoramic views of human nature, and life, and destiny—a view caught on the shuddering brink and from the fearful angle of all but madness—is not a libel upon the Divine Author like the "Cenci," nor a pæan sheathed in blasphemy like the "Faust" but that, in spirit, tone, and language, it doth

"Assert Eternal Providence,  
And vindicate the ways of God to man."

And if "Hamlet" explains not, and if it even deepens in some measure the mystery of human guilt, it at the same time proclaims, trumpet-tongued, the clear certainty of present punishment, and the strong probability of future retribution.

What Shakspeare's theological creed was, we do not profess to know. An author recently maintains that he was an ideal

pantheist, and quotes in proof of it his words in "Macbeth"—"we are such stuff as dreams are made of," and the famous finale of Prospero. But Prospero's speech is merely a paraphrase of the Scripture statement—"all these things shall be dissolved." And Macbeth's words are more in keeping with the moment in his history, when, in the prospect of death, and in the madness of desperate guilt, all things were becoming unreal and swimming around his vision, than they are expressive of his Creator's calm and settled opinion. The murderer is hunted back into the refuge of atheism, and sleepless himself, would seek to identify sleep and death. "Our little life is rounded with a sleep." As if he said, with a ghastly smile—"sleep has forsaken me, and thus rendered my life a hideous fragment, a yawning chasm; but death cannot so fly: it must close and complete my career." But he who speaks of "sleep" with Macbeth, speaks also of "*dreams*" with Hamlet. Whatever Shakspeare's notion of *religious* matters, however, might be, it is interesting to know that his theory of *morals*, as it may be gathered from his greater and more serious plays, is essentially sound. This may not appear to some a matter of much consequence; but, as it is pleasing now and then to turn from commonplace clocks, and to learn the hour from a sun-dial, so we like sometimes to look away from systems of moral philosophy, to the living and sunlit tables of this great master of human nature. To others, again, his deliverances on such subjects may possibly seem oracular, as from a new Dodona seated among the oaks of the Avon.

The intellectual and poetical qualities of Shakspeare find in "Hamlet" ample scope for display. It is the longest of his dramas, and at the same time, the richest. The sun of semi-madness, vertical above, has produced a wild and tropical luxuriance of imagery. Every sentence is starred. No play of his contains at once so much sense and so much nonsense, so much bombastic verse and so much dense and pointed prose, so much extravagant license of fancy and so much profound insight. And so broad is the canvas, that there is ample room in it for all those extremes: they never interfere or jostle; the profoundest practical philosophy and the wildest raving here meet together: "vice and a ridiant angel" em-

brace each other; and Billingsgate like that of a drab, and eloquence and apprehension like that of a god, are united, if not reconciled. It is this exceeding comprehension of view which has rendered "Hamlet" the true "Psalm of Life," exhibiting it, not partially, or by selection, or in colors, but calotyping it calmly and sternly as a mystic, fantastical, but real whole.

Across this broad picture, Shakspeare has caused to shoot one ray from the unseen world. We refer, of course, to the ghost. There is nothing which shows more the delicate and masterly handling of a Creator (who loves, understands, and treats tenderly his own children, not, like a plagiarist and stepfather, ignorantly and despitefully uses them) than the management of this awful visitor. The words "horribly beautiful" are applicable to him, and to him alone. There is not one vulgar element about him. He is—shall we say?—a perfect gentleman, and has a "courteous action." One desire, that of revenge, burns in his bosom, but it burns rather against the crime than the criminal. He leaves his wife "to Heaven, and to the thorns" in her own breast. In his last appearance, while the queen is affrighted at Hamlet's ecstacy, he tells him, in compassion, to "step between her and her fighting soul." And how admirably has Shakspeare caught the true shape, form, and figure of a spiritual being, such as we at present conceive of it! He is not a vague vapour: he is "clad in complete steel;" his beard is visible, "a sable silvered;" his "beaver is up;" his countenance is "very pale," but "more in sorrow than in anger;" he has come from literal "fire," and his thoughts, feelings, and language, resemble those of one still in the flesh. And yet, around the steel, and the beaver, and the beard, there hangs a haze of spiritual mystery and terror, which lends and receives effect from the materialism of the apparition. He "vanishes at the crowing of the cock." He passes, like heat, through the solid ground. Shakspeare has thus avoided the extremes of representing a ghost in too shadowy or too gross a light—of spinning this grisly thread too thickly or too thin—to homespun or to gossamer. His shadow is something of a substance, and his substance is something of a shade.

And such a nondescript form, too, appears at first Hamlet



himself—a ghost among men, the phantom son of a phantom sire, neither a hero nor a coward, neither right flesh and blood nor a mere abstraction, armed, like Satan, “with what *seemed* both sword and shield,” and yet, like him, shrinking away, at times, from the contest. He stands between the living and the dead, and seems to disdain all critical classification. He may be compared to one of those shifting shapes, met with in water, mist, or cloud, which appears, at one angle and from one distance, a palace; at another, a temple; at a third, a misshapen monster; and at a fourth, a man. Thus, Hamlet, at one time, and to one observer, seems the bravest and strongest of men; anon, the weakest and most cowardly: at one time, devout and rational; at another, a fierce and profane babbler: now, an ardent lover; and now, a heartless insulter of the woman he had professed to love: now, prompt in action to rashness; and now, slow to indolence and fatuity: now, a counterfeit of madness; and now, really insane: now, the most cunning, and now the most careless, of men: now a rogue, now a fool, now a wise man, and now a heterogeneous compound of all three. Twenty theories have been propounded of him; all have been plausibly based on particular points in his character; and yet no theory hitherto is entirely, or even approximately, complete; each is serviceable chiefly in blowing out the one immediately before itself: and still Hamlet seems, as he stands, shrouded and shifting to every breath, to say to his critics, as he said to Rosincrantz and Guildenstern “You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would *pluck* out the *heart* of my mystery; you would *sound* me from the lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is *much music*, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet *cannot you make it speak*.”

We happen at present to have beside us only two of those twenty “soundings,” and beg leave to say something of them, ere propounding our own view. The first is that of Dr. Johnson. It comes, as Hamlet would say, “trippingly off the tongue,” and is written with more than his usual careless rotundity and lazy elaboration of style. It commences by praising, very properly, the “variety” of the play. But what does the doctor mean by the “merriment” it excites? Surely it is “very tragical mirth.” Even in the laughter of this drama,

its heart is sad. Hamlet and a gravedigger are the two jesters! And while the wit of the one is wild, reckless, turbulent, like the glee of the damned, that of the other has a death-rattle in its throat, and, returned to us on the echoes of the grave, produces an unspeakably dreary effect. Dr. Johnson adds, "The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth." This we question. At least us it has always impressed with a feeling of melancholy. Indeed, the lighter parts of the play, consisting more of wit than of humor, excite rather wonder at the sharp turns, lively sallies, and fierce retorts of a stung spirit, than any broad and genial laughter. He says, that "some scenes neither forward nor retard the action." This we may grant; but are not these in fine keeping with the "slow, reluctant" delay of the hero? Shakspeare must linger, in sympathy with Hamlet! Nay, this was sometimes, as we have seen, the manner of the poet. An inspired loiterer, he now and then leans over some beautiful stream, or pauses at some fine point of prospect, or strikes into some brief by-way of humor, or character, or pathos, even when his day's journey, and the day itself, are both drawing to a close. For why? He was a man, not a railway machine; and, besides, as his soul had its habitual dwelling in summer, *his* days were all long.

He says, that "Hamlet was an instrument rather than an agent," but suggests no reason why Shakspeare has made him so. He charges, finally, the play with a lack of poetical justice and poetical probability. The apparition left the regions of the dead to little purpose. The revenge which he demands is not obtained but by the death of him who is required to take it; and the gratification which would arise from the destruction of a usurper and a murderer is abated by the death of Ophelia, the young and beautiful, the harmless and the pious." But, first, the apparition's object *was* gained—the ghost did not leave the grave in vain—the murderer was detected and died; and, secondly, Shakspeare probably consulted something higher than our "gratification." He sought, probably, the broad moral purpose we have already expressed; and, if questioned as to poetical justice, might have replied in words similar to those of Scott—perhaps the noblest passage in a moral point of view, in all that writer's works—"A cha-

acter of a lofty stamp is degraded, rather than exalted, by an attempt to reward virtue with temporal prosperity. Such is not the recompense which Providence has deemed worthy of suffering merit, and it is a dangerous and fatal doctrine, that rectitude of conduct and of principle are either naturally allied with, or adequately rewarded by, the gratification of our passions, or attainment of our wishes. In a word, if a virtuous and self-denied character is dismissed with temporal wealth, greatness, or rank, the reader will be apt to say, 'Verily, virtue has had its reward.' But a glance at the great picture of life will show that duty is seldom thus remunerated." And what is true of the apportionment of the gifts of Providence is true also of its evils. It were degrading to a lofty character, not only to enrich it with uniform good fortune, but to give it an unnatural insulation from the great and wide ruin which is produced by guilt.

We pass to Goethe's far more celebrated account of "Hamlet," of which the "Edinburgh Review" declares, that there is "nothing so good in all our own commentators—nothing at once so poetical, so feeling, and so just." After a beautiful picture of Hamlet's original character, and a paraphrase of his story, Goethe says, "to me it is clear that Shakspeare meant to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul *unfit* for the performance of it." And then follows the well-known and exquisitely-beautiful figure—"An oak-tree is planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom: the roots expand, the jar is shivered. A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear, and must not cast away." This is very fine, but is it true? Does it open the lock of Hamlet's character? Does it account for all, or for the most, of the mysteries connected with it?

Now, we do not find any proofs that Hamlet was peculiarly weak of nerve; nay, we find many proofs to the contrary. Did he not front his father's spirit in arms? Did he not rebuke his mother, and pink old Polonius, mistaking him for his uncle? Did he not bravely confront Laertes, and at last stab the king? These actions and others seem to prove him endowed with the "Nemean lion's nerve;" and, although he

more than once charges himself with cowardice, yet this occurs always in passages where he seems to be beating about in search of causes for his conduct, and to be lashing himself, by imaginary arguments, into rage. Nor does Shakspeare wish to represent him as peculiarly delicate and tender. He seems rather an oak than a flower-jar, though it be an oak shaken by the wind. No namby-pamby sentimentalist had he ever been, but a brave, strong man, whose melancholy and exasperation bring forth, in tumultuous profusion, the excessive riches of a prematurely thoughtful and very powerful soul. His is manifestly no weakly, elegant and graceful nature unhinged; but a strong, rarely-gifted, and bold spirit, in anguish, uncertainty, aberration, and despair. Though there were no other evidence, the vigor and tact discovered in the trick passed upon Rosincrantz and Guildenstern, in sending them to be executed instead of himself, prove that he was an energetic and not a feeble character. So that, although Goethe has extracted "music" from this strange instrument, he has not "plucked out" the *heart* of its mystery.

Let us now come to state our own impressions, which we do not propound as dogmatically certain, but simply as highly probable.

First, then, we do not think that Shakspeare ever intended Hamlet for a thoroughly consistent and regular character, swayed always by intelligible motives, and adjusted, in his actions, either according to fixed principles or to steady currents of passion. He meant to show us a mind of great general powers and warm passions, liable to every species of whim and caprice, and at last, through the force of melancholy and mingling circumstances, partially unhinged—aware, however, of this, and with astuteness enough to turn the *real* aberration into a means for supplying evidence for the existence of the *assumed*. Such a nondescript being, hovering between the worlds of reality and insane dream, Shakspeare chose, that he might survey mankind from a new and strange angle, and through a medium which should bring out more forcibly the mysterious contrasts of human life. Hamlet is a being all but loosened from humanity, whom we see bursting tie after tie which had bound him to his kind, and surveying them at last almost from an ideal altitude. He is a "chartered liber-

time," with method in his madness, and with madness in his method, and who, whether he rushes or pauses on his uncertain path—now with the rush of the cataract above, and now with the pause of the deep pool below—is sure to dash a strong and lawless light upon the subjects or the persons he encounters. He becomes thus a quaint and mighty mask, from behind which Shakspeare speaks out sentiments which he could not else have so freely disclosed; and—shall we say?—the great dramatist has used Hamlet as Turpin did Black Bess—he has drenched him with the wine of demi-derangement, and then accomplished his perilous ride.

Secondly, Hamlet's conduct is entirely what might have been expected from the construction of his mind, and the effect sad circumstances have produced upon him. He is "everything by turns, and nothing long." No deep passion of any kind can root itself in his mind, although a hundred passions pass and repass, and rage and subside within his soul. He well speaks of himself as consisting of divers "parts." His very convictions are not profound. He at first implicitly believes the word of the ghost as to his uncle's guilt, but afterwards his belief falters, and he has to be re-assured by the matter of the play. The mask of total madness he snatches up, wears *con-amore* for awhile, and then wearies of it, and drops it, and then resumes it again. This, too, explains his conduct to Ophelia. He loves her; but his love, or its expression, yields for a time to the paroxysm of the passions excited by the ghost; it returns, like a demon who had been dismissed, in sevenfold force, and he rushes into her apartment, and goes through antics, partly to sustain his assumed character of madness, but principally as the wild outcome of real love; his passion is again overlaid by the whirling current of events, but breaks out at last, like a furnace, at her grave. So, too, with his desire for vengeance on his father's murderer. It has lighted, not as Goethe has it, on a feeble, but on a flighty nature; the oak is not in a tiny jar, it is planted in a broad field, but a field where there is not much "depth of earth," and where many other trees growing beside draw a portion of the depth away. It is not the want of nerve: he could kill the king, in a momentary impulse, as he killed Polonius, but he cannot form or pursue any strong and steady plan for his

destruction; if that plan, at least, required time for its development. Other feelings, too, interfere with its accomplishment. There is at times in his mind a reluctance to the task as a work of butchery—the butchery of an uncle and a step-father. Regard for his mother's feelings, and the consequences to result on her, is no stranger to his soul, and serves to cool his ardor and to excuse his delay. The desire of vengeance never, in short, becomes the main and master passions of his mind, and this, simply, because that powerful, but morbid and jangled mind is incapable of a master passion, and of the execution of a fixed purpose. One consistency only is there in Hamlet's character, that of subtle and poetic intellect. This penetrates with its searching light every nook and corner of the play, follows him through all the windings of his course, unites in some measure the contradictory passions which roll and fluctuate around him, inspirits his language into eloquence, wit, and wisdom, and makes him the *facile princeps* of Shakspeare's fools—those illustrious personages who “never say a foolish thing, and never do a wise one.” Such a “foremost fool of all this world,” with brilliant powers, uncertain will, and “scattery” purposes and passions, is Hamlet the Dane, as, at least, he appears to us after much and careful pondering of his character. Thow into the crucible strong intellect, vivid fancy, irregular will, fluctuating courage, impulsive and inconsistent feelings, an excitable heart, a melancholy temperament, and add to these the damaging, weakening, yet infuriating influences of a father's murder, a mother's marriage, the visit of a ghost, an unsettled passion for Ophelia, the meddling interference of a weak father-in-law, the spectacle of a disturbed and degraded country, the feeling of his own incapacity for fixed resolve or permanent energy of passion, and from this wierd mixture there will come out a Hamlet, in all his strength and weakness, wisdom and folly, energetic commencements and lame and impotent conclusions, insane and aimless fury, and strong, sudden gleams of resolution and valor, vain and sounding bombast, and clear, terse, and inspired eloquence. What weakness he has does not lie so much in any one part of his mind, as in the want of proper management and grasp of his powers as a whole. Partially insane he is, but his insanity is the reverse of a monomania; it arises from the confusion and

too rapid succession of moods and feelings, which he cannot consolidate into a whole, or press into one strong, narrow current, running on to his purpose.

"As the Pontick sea  
To the Propontick and the Hellespont."

Is it too much to call him a sublime and sententious, an earnest and eloquent fool?

Yet it is clear that Shakspeare had a peculiar and profound sympathy with Hamlet. He lingers beside him long. He lavishes all his wealth upon him. He seems to love to look out at mankind through the strange window of those wild eyes. Was this because Hamlet was (as is generally supposed) the child of his mature age, or was it from a certain fellow-feeling? Hamlet is what Shakspeare would have been, had he ever been thoroughly soured, and had that magnificent head of his ever begun to reel and totter. Had Shakspeare, like Swift, Johnson, Byron, and Scott, a fear of "dying a top," and has he shot out that awful fear into his impersonation of the Prince of Denmark, and thus relieved and carried it off?

The general moral of the play has been stated above; but there are besides numberless minor morals, as well as separate beauties, scattered in golden sentences throughout, which must be familiar to all. There is the picture of man, in his strange contrarieties of wormhood and godhood—his head of gold, and his feet of miry clay—compacted out of all contradictions; and who—even as the Andes include in their sweep, from the ocean below to the hoary head of Chimborazo above, all climates, seasons, and productions of earth—touches, as *he* ascends, all conditions of being, and runs parallel to all the gradations of the universe. Pascal, Herbert, Young and Pope, have written in emulous and eloquent antithesis on the same theme; but they all pale before this one expression of Hamlet's (after a matchless enumeration of man's noble qualities)—"*this quintessence of dust.*" Where in literature such an anti-climax? such a jerking down of proud pretensions; such two worlds of description and satire condensed into two words? This, and many other expressions here, and in other of Shakspeare's works, prove what an accusing spirit, what a myriad-armed and tongued misanthrope, he might have been!

But a soured Shakspeare is a thought difficult to be entertained.

The two famous soliloquies, again, seem "God's canon against self-slaughter" versified. They have, we doubt not, deterred many a rash spirit from suicide. If they do not oppose it upon the highest ground, they do it on one generally intelligible and powerful. The prayer of the guilty king is worth a thousand dull homilies on the subject. It points to the everlasting distinction between a *sinful*, and a *sinner's* prayer. The advice of Polonius to his son is full of practical wisdom; but owing to the contrast with the frozen stupidity of the man from whom it comes, reminds us of a half-melted and streaming mass of ice. The irony and quaint moral which gild the skull in the graveyard, till it glares and chatters, are in keeping with the wild story and wilder characters, but are not devoid of edifying instruction to those who can surpass the first shudder of disgust. And the character and fate of Ophelia convey, in the most plaintive manner, a still tenderer and more delicate lesson.

Surely Shakspeare was the greatest and most humane of all mere moralists. Seeing more clearly than mere man ever saw into the evils of human nature and the corruptions of society, into the natural weakness and the acquired vice of man, he can yet love, pity, forget his anger, and clothe him in the mellow light of his genius, like the sun, who, in certain days of peculiar balm and beauty, seems to shed his beams, like an amnesty, upon all beings. But we must not forget that Shakspeare is no pattern for us—that this very generosity of heart seems, we fear, to have blinded him to the *special* character and adaptations of the Christian scheme—and that we, as Christians, and not mere philanthropists, are bound, while pitying the guilty, to do indignant and incessant battle against the giant Something, for which sin is but a feeble name, which slew our Saviour, and which has all but ruined our race.

I have dwelt so long on "Hamlet," that I must now hurry to a close.

With regard to Shakspeare's critics and commentators I will not say, with Hazlitt, that "if you would see the greatness of human genius, read Shakspeare; if you would see the smallness of human learning, read his commentators." But

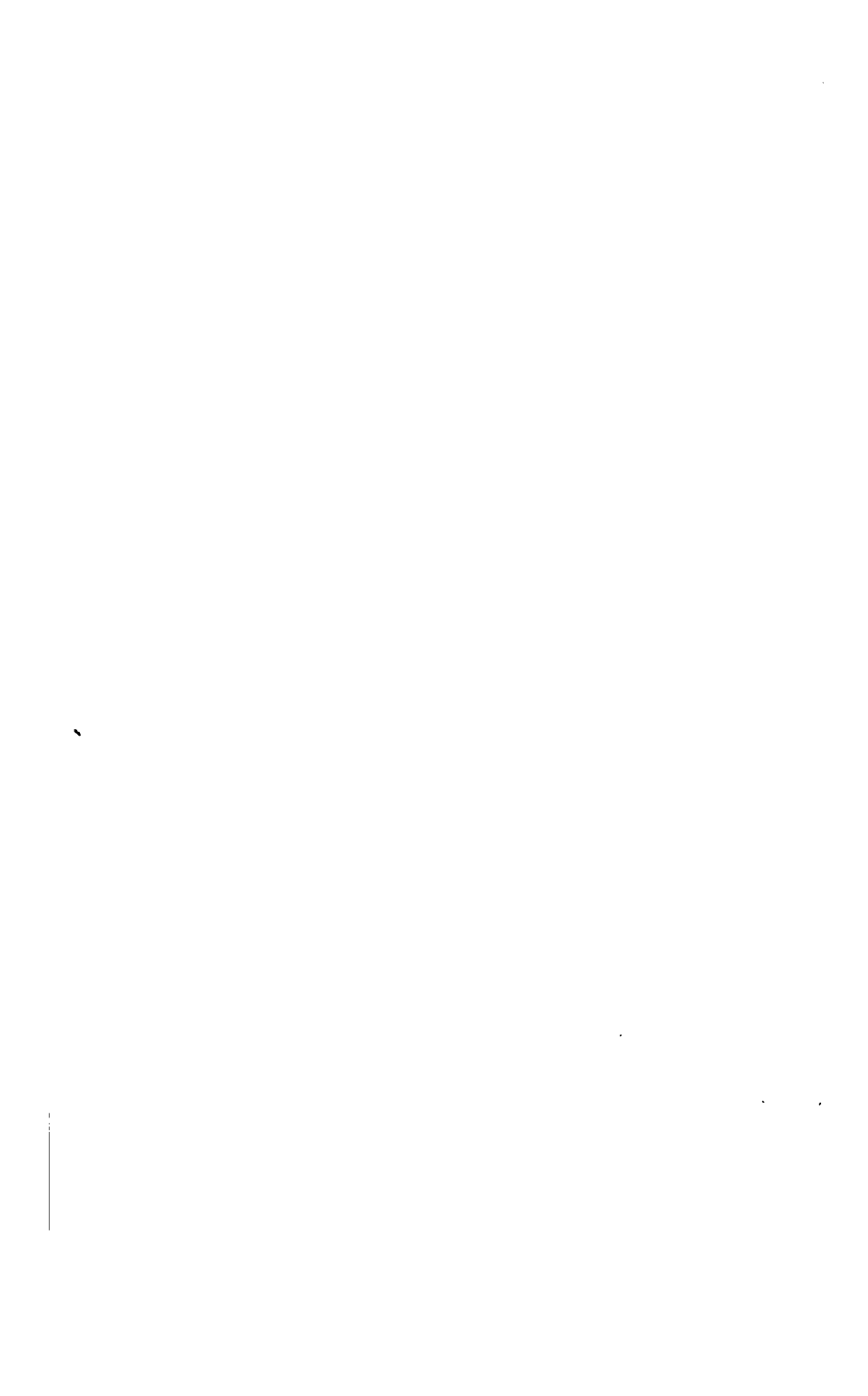


I will say, that I have learned more of Shakspeare from Hazlitt, than from any other quarter, except from Shakspeare himself.

In preparing these cursory remarks upon Shakspeare, I have studiously avoided re-reading any works upon the subject. I may, however, recommend to those who wish to sail out farther upon this great ocean—Johnson's "Preface to Shakspeare" (excellent so far as it goes), Hazlitt's "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays," Schlegel's "Lectures on Dramatic Literature," Mrs. Jameson on Shakspeare's Female Characters, and an admirable series which appeared in "Blackwood," entitled "Shakspeare in Germany."

I close by claiming a high place for this poet among the benefactors of this kind. With august philanthropists, Howard or Wilberforce, we may not class him. Into that seventh heaven of invention, where Milton and Dante dwelt, he came only sometimes, not for want of power, but because his sphere was a wider and larger one—he had business to do in the veins of the earth as well as in the azure depth of air. But if force of genius—sympathy with every form and every feeling of humanity—the heart of a man united to the imagination of a poet, and wielding the Briarean hand of a demigod—if the writing of thirty-two plays which are coloring to this hour the literature of the world—if the diffusion of harmless happiness in immeasurable quantity—if the stimulation of innumerable minds—if the promotion of the spirit of charity and of universal brotherhood—if these constitute for mortal man titles to the name of benefactor, and to that praise which ceases not with the sun, but expands into immortality, the name and the praise must support the throne which Shakspeare has established over the minds of the inhabitants of an earth which may be known in other parts of the universe as "Shakspeare's world."





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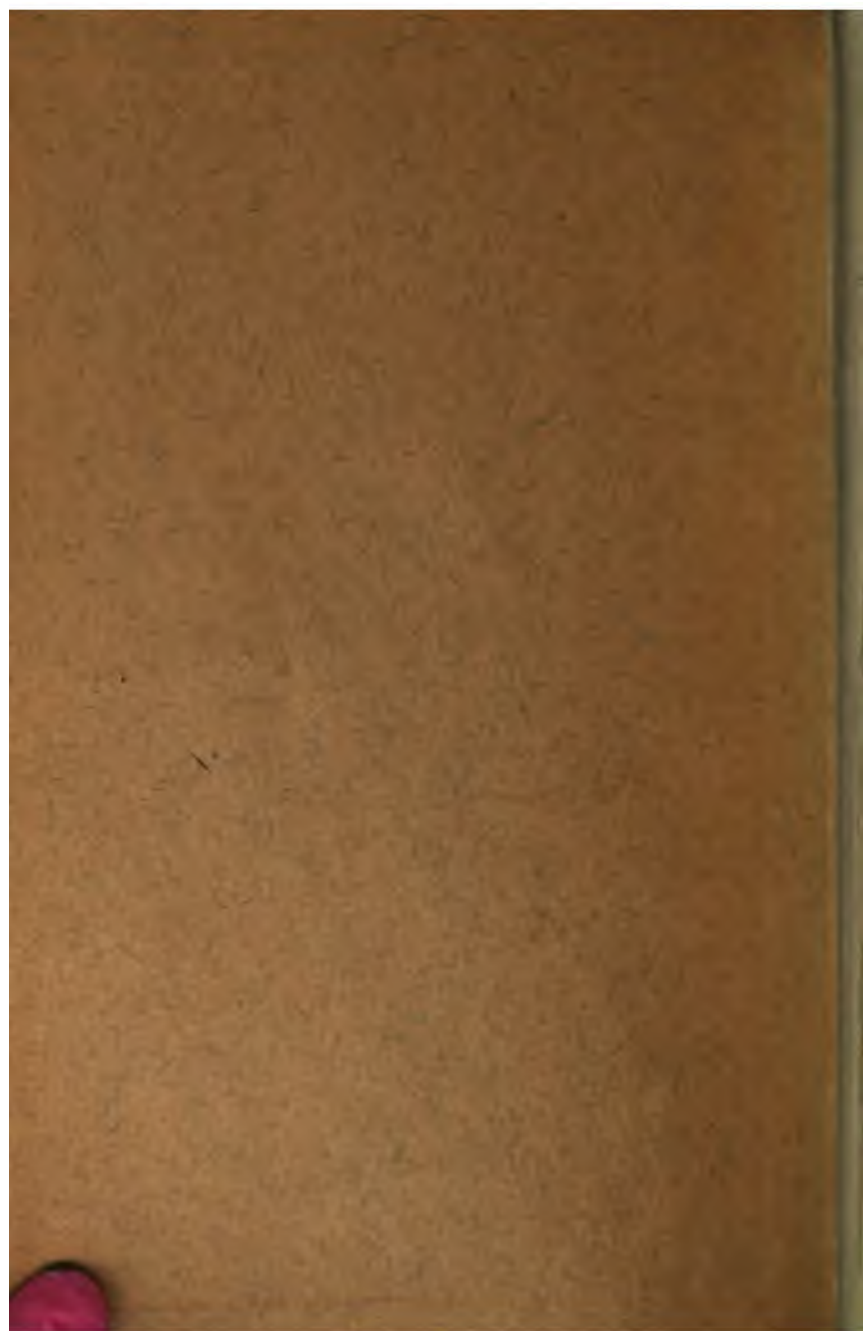
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